

**Thoughts  
on  
Pastoral Authority**

**DRAFT V. 16**

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## Preface

Few have had the privilege of being raised in the “brethren” tradition, as I have had the privilege of, and though I left the tradition 7 years ago I am coming to realize that much of what they stood for – while in sharp contrast to what is found in modern churches – is to be appreciated.

For those unfamiliar with the tradition, I came from the Tunbridge-Wells Brethren tradition and as such we had no pastors, no ordained elders (though there were elders), no instruments, no band. It was a very pure, simple style of worship focused on singing the old hymns *a capella* and Bible teaching centered on expositional exegesis. Teaching was done in “reading meetings” where any male that was a member could teach or share, and there would be the occasional “address” (sermon) mainly from those who were uniquely gifted as teachers. From an organizational structure standpoint, you would call it a very “flat” organization where the focus was on personal walks with God rather than accountability to a human, pastoral hierarchy.

In that environment, with no pastors, there was no such thing as pastoral authority (I will just use the word pastoral authority because that is the vernacular; my personal opinion is that elders have authority but we will just refer to pastoral authority for ease) and elder authority was limited to cases of excommunication and to the actual running of the “meeting” (we did not call it church).

Since I left the Brethren tradition, I have been surprised at how some “congregants” look at pastoral authority, and what has surprised me the most is how some *pastors and elders* look at their own authority. This has caused me to dig in and make sure my thoughts are based on scripture as that is always the question: what saith the scripture? (Romans 4:3; Romans 11:2; Galatians 4:30)

## Introduction

This document is an attempt to examine what the scriptures say about pastoral authority.

As will be mentioned later on, it is a noble thing to receive a teaching and then compare it against the scriptures and that is true for the teaching in this document as well. From the conversations I have had with fellow Christians, and the experiences I have had with a certain church, it became clear to me that there is very limited teaching on pastoral authority and there is a very limited understanding of pastoral authority from a “congregants” point of view.

When we are not firmly grounded in our understanding of scriptural teaching, we become susceptible to being carried away with every wind of doctrine by those who have sleights of hand and are cunning and intend on deceiving. Ephesians 4:14. This makes it clear we are not to just accept all teaching and all teachers and all authority but we are to be careful and examine it all by the Word of God.

This document is meant to lay out, systematically, the teaching of scripture on pastoral authority. The reader is encouraged to carefully consider what is written and then cross-reference the document against the scriptures to see if the teaching measures up to the Word of God – which is the only standard.

The hope is that after reading this document the reader is more firmly rooted in their own walk with the Lord, understanding the benefits, pitfalls, extents and limits of pastoral authority in their own walk.

## Method of Exegesis

### Multiple Passages and Context

No scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20) and so it is critical to look across the range of scripture and not just isolated passages when unpacking any given scriptural doctrine. In our case, it will be important to not only look at multiple passages, but also to look at the context of each passage so we understand not only the detailed teaching of the Spirit of God, but also the spirit of his teaching.

### Access the Underlying Greek

The author is definitely not a Greek scholar, however we are encouraged to be workmen in the Word of God:

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

As a workman we are allowed, and expected, to have a set of tools. Just as a furniture maker may use a lathe, a planer, a table saw, a hammer and more – but yet could not create any one of those mechanical

tools himself – so we as workmen are allowed to tap into the expertise of others in order to further our own understanding of the Word of God.

When we are told to rightly divide the Word of Truth as a workman, two things become really clear:

1. The scripture can be divided the right way and the wrong way. Quoting scripture is not enough; we must understand the teaching of the scriptures and be careful to not handle the Word of God deceitfully.
2. Dividing the Word of Truth requires skill as a workman. Just as no ordinary person can create a fine piece of workmanship, so too rightly dividing the Word of Truth requires skill and care. Whether that has been done in this document will be for others to judge.

And so it will be very helpful for us to access the work of Greek scholars who have taken their advanced training and knowledge and provided it to us in a form usable by non-scholars. This scholarly work of theirs helps us understand with greater clarity our ancient book within the context of how its words were used during the time of the writing.

For example, there are words being used today that were used differently than when I was a teenager. The word “bad” just a few years ago actually meant “good”, whereas when I was a youngster bad just meant bad. And so for me to understand the conversation between two teenagers, if I am not familiar with how their words are meant to be understood, I could actually listen in on their conversation and come away with the exact opposite understanding of how things went. That “bad” car was actually a really cool car – but because I was not up to speed on their vernacular (knowing the word “bad” is not good enough, I also needed to know how it was being used) I came away with exactly the wrong impression.

Along these lines we will seek to understand not only which Greek words were being used across passages (using Strong’s work) but we will also seek to understand the use of those words using *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Combining the work of these scholars with what I trust is a careful unpacking of the verses, I trust with the Spirit of God’s help we can come to an understanding of this important subject.

### We Must Exclude Apostolic Authority

Finally, we must realize that the apostles were given special authority within the church, and because the New Testament was written in the Apostolic age (one of the Jewish requirements for a book to be part of the canon of New Testament was that the book had to be written by an Apostle or by an Apostle’s protégé), we have to rightly divide when the authority being exercised was Apostolic authority or plain vanilla pastoral authority.

The apostles were part of the foundation of the church (Ephesian 2:20) and thus have a different role and authority than the rest of us, who are part of the building which rests upon their foundation.

## A Look at Some Key Passages and Concepts

We will now look at several passages or combination of passages that, though unpacked individually, when taken together provide a coherent and comprehensive teaching of pastoral authority.

One interesting thing that the reader will notice is how often the Spirit of God tells us what pastoral authority is NOT. Just as an artist will use negative space to highlight the positive – and in some cases the negative space is what allows you to see the actual shape – in this subject of pastoral authority the Spirit of God quite often tells us what they are NOT allowed to do, what they are NOT allowed to be like – thus creating negative space to highlight the positive role they are given.

One: [Hebrews 13: 7 – 11](#) and [Luke 22:24 - 27](#)

Our first passage to examine follows:

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.  
Hebrews 13:7 - 10

What does it mean to remember someone

This passage tells us to remember them which have the rule over us, and so we should ask ourselves: What does it mean to remember someone?

The word “remember” is Strong’s 3421, of which Vine’s has this to say:

2. *mnemoneuo* (μνημονεύω, 3421) signifies “to call to mind, remember”; it is used absolutely in Mark 8:18; everywhere else it has an object, (a) persons, Luke 17:32; Gal. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:8, where the RV rightly has “remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead”; Paul was not reminding Timothy (nor did he need to) that Christ was raised from the dead (κιν), what was needful for him was to “remember” (to keep in mind) the One who rose, the Source and Supplier of all his requirements; (b) things, e.g., Matt. 16:9; John 15:20; 16:21; Acts 20:35; Col. 4:18; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:9; Heb. 11:15, “had been mindful of”; 13:7; Rev. 18:5; (c) a clause, representing a

circumstance, etc., John 16:4; Acts 20:31; Eph. 2:11; 2 Thess. 2:5; Rev. 2:5; 3:3; in Heb. 11:22 it signifies “to make mention of.” See MENTION.¶<sup>1</sup>

So to remember our rulers means to keep them in mind; don’t just hear their sermons / teachings and then let their words out the other ear. Pay attention; remember their teachings; don’t ignore them.

One interesting facet of the Brethren tradition was that families tended to stay in the group for generations. This nurtured a sociological effect of younger generations being influenced not just by their own father and mother, but also being influenced by teachers that had lived in previous generations who, through their life and teachings, had instilled certain principles into the organization. When socializing with other families it would not be uncommon at all to hear your dad or someone else say “Harry Hayhoe used to always say...”. Many of us had never met Harry Hayhoe, but he was a highly regarded teacher from a previous generation and so the older teachers were “remembered” this way. I believe that is the thrust of this phrase.

What does it mean to have the rule over you

Again, our text says:

Remember them which have the rule over you. Hebrews 13:7

The word “rule” in Greek is Strong’s 2233 and it has the thought of “leading”; here is what Vine’s has to say:

*hegeomai* (ἡγέομαι, 2233), “to lead,” is translated “to rule” in Heb. 13:7, 17, 24 (KJV marg., in the first two, “are the guides” and “guide.”)<sup>2</sup>

*hegeomai* (ἡγέομαι, 2233) primarily signifies “to lead”; then, “to consider”; it is translated “accounting” in Heb. 11:26, RV (KJV, “esteeming”); 2 Pet. 3:15, “account.” See CHIEF, COUNT, ESTEEM, GOVERNOR, JUDGE, RULE, SUPPOSE, THINK.<sup>3</sup>

The thought is “to lead”, or to “guide”, and as we will see right below the thought is NOT “ruling” like we think of ruling with authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 521). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 540). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 9). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

The thought would be more like this: Imagine that you are a mountaineer and want to climb K2 – which is one of the world’s deadliest (yet doable) climbs. You would be wise to hire a guide who would lead you in your adventure. Imagine if you were ascending K2, with your trusted guide out front, and then all of a sudden you saw a different path than he was taking. You call up to him and say “Hey, I’m taking a right hand turn right here; I’m not going to follow you on this section of the mountain.” If he turns to you and says “I would not do that if I were you. I know you haven’t been this way before, but trust me, a guy last week took that turn and slipped to his death. Just follow me please.”

You decide to take his advice and not take the right-hand turn, but instead follow him in the path he is creating. You were letting him “guide” and “lead” you, while there is no way anyone would think that he was “ruling” over you. We will develop this analogy more later on.

Notice that it would be inappropriate for the guide to demand obedience. But as you pay attention to what he is saying, and as he safely navigates you in your climb, you are persuaded he has the right direction; you are listening to him not because he has authority but because he is proving himself to have wise direction as the leader of the group.

I believe that is the sense in which elders “rule”. It’s important to note that the term here does NOT mean to “rule” in terms of how Gentiles think of ruling - and for that we can turn to Luke:

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 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. 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. Luke 22:24 - 27

Here the Lord makes it absolutely clear that any leadership in the Kingdom of God is NOT to be like how Gentiles lead. It is leadership NOT from a place of authority, but from a place of service and lowliness. The leaders in the Kingdom are not to have high positions, are not to be served by others, and their rule is NOT a top down “do what I say” kind of authority.

The word “chief” here is the same word 2233, which is the same word in our text in Hebrews 13 above. So when the Spirit of God uses the word “2233”, in Hebrews he has already told us in Luke that the kind of “ruling” in the Kingdom of God is NOT to be like the ruling in the Gentile kingdoms.

Though the same word “rule” is used in Hebrews, the Spirit of God makes it clear that the actual working out of it is exactly the opposite. Kind of like our “bad” car that was actually a cool car.

So the chief / leader / ruler is NOT to take a place of authority over others, though he is called to lead, but instead he, like Christ, takes a place of humble service.

And, while the Gentiles bestowed titles of benefactor upon each other, in God’s Kingdom there are to be no honorary titles such as “Executive Pastor”, “Senior Pastor”, “Head of the Elders” given to those who serve in the Kingdom. Such titles are a Gentile tradition meant to create distance between the rulers and those ruled, and there was to be NONE of that in God’s Kingdom. (At the end of this document is a link to a video by John MacArthur who feels the same way.) Even the powerful Apostle Paul was simply called “beloved brother” by another powerful apostle, Peter. The apostles did not even give each other honorary titles but referred to one another as “beloved brother”. See 2 Peter 3:15.

As a summary: those who have the “rule” in the church are NOT like Gentile rulers who command and control, but those who rule are leaders and guides who do NOT tell others what to do from an authority standpoint - “Do what I say or I kick you out of my church” - but they take a humble position of serving through listening, hospitality, walking alongside in troubles – and in that capacity of service congregants hear what they have to say and are blessed by it. If the “chief” is to be like Christ, keep in mind the absolute sheer amount of work Christ did in serving others without commanding and controlling.

We can expect imperfection in leaders

Whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Hebrews 13:7 - 8

We can expect our leaders to be faulty, and this is not a reason for them to not be in leadership. However, we are to examine their lives and consider what is the “end” - or the net result - of what their life is about. We cannot expect perfection in their walk. Only Jesus Christ is unchanging from day to day, and so seeing change in leaders’ walks should be proof to us of their pursuit of Christ. Far from it being discouraging to us, it should be an encouragement that they are on the path of progressive sanctification.

We are to follow their faith, not their faults.

### Immediate warning to not follow everyone

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Hebrews 13:9 - 10

It is very instructive that RIGHT AFTER telling us to remember our leaders in verse 7, the Spirit of God IMMEDIATELY has the Writer warns us to not be carried about with bad doctrine in verse 9.

This is an immediate proof that God does not expect us to do everything leaders say, or to take everything they say as the truth. Immediately after telling us they have the rule, he tells us not to let them carry us around with bad teaching. We are not to blindly follow them or their teachings. It is absolutely appropriate to examine their walk (verse 7) and their teachings (verse 9).

### Two: Hebrews 13:17 - 18

The next passage we will examine is just a little further down in the same chapter of Hebrews:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. Hebrews 13:17 - 18

### What does the word “obey” mean

Obey here is Strong’s number 3982, and here is what Vine’s has to say:

2. *peitho* (πείθω, 3982), “to persuade, to win over,” in the passive and middle voices, “to be persuaded, to listen to, to obey,” is so used with this meaning, in the middle voice, e.g., in Acts 5:36–37 (in v. 40, passive voice, “they agreed”); Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 3:3. The “obedience” suggested is not by submission to authority, but resulting from persuasion.

“*Peithō* and *pisteuō*, ‘to trust,’ are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, cf. Heb. 3:18–19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief. Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God. Of course it is persuasion of the truth that results in faith (we believe because we are persuaded that the thing

is true, a thing does not become true because it is believed), but *peitho*, in NT suggests an actual and outward result of the inward persuasion and consequent faith.”\* See ASSURANCE, B, No. 3.<sup>4</sup>

It's clear from Vine's that the word "obey" does not mean obey in terms of the father / child relationship, but rather it is an obedience that comes from persuasion and trust.

Coming back to our K2 example, when the guide tells us to not take the "shortcut" he doesn't mean he is going to punish you if you do take the shortcut. But you "obey" him because you trust him as he has proven himself an able guide, and you are persuaded he is right and you should not take the shortcut. So your "obedience" was not obedience as to a father, but you were persuaded through trust that what he had to say was right. If you "disobeyed", the guide had no ability to punish you but rather your path of "disobedience" leads you to fall of the cliff. That is punishment enough.

The word "rule"

Again we come across the same word "rule", Strong's 2233 as above. There is no need to develop our understanding of this word or concept of "ruling" any further.

What does submit mean

As a refresher here is the section of the verse:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves. Hebrews 13:17

The word "submit" is Strong's 5226 and here is what Vine's has to say:

*hureiko* (ὑπείκω, 5226), "to retire, withdraw" (*huro*, under, *eiko*, "to yield"), hence, "to yield, submit," is used metaphorically in Heb. 13:17, of "submitting" to spiritual guides in the churches. ¶<sup>5</sup>

The word literally means to 'yield under'. When we yield, we let others go first. I think we can all agree that it is appropriate that we let the leaders lead and that we should have what is referred to sometimes as a "teachable spirit". We should be like the Bereans who were noble and listened:

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<sup>4</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 438–439). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 607). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Acts 17:10 - 11

We should let them teach, we should listen with an open mind, we should be respectful and let them finish their sentences and complete their thoughts without us jumping in; if they have proven themselves trustworthy, our default mode is to receive the word. Our default mode is not to challenge and argue. However, afterwards we are to search the scriptures to see if what they were saying is true. This type of submission is noble. Searching the scriptures to see if what a teacher says is true is not what a rebel does, it is not what an insubordinate person does, it's what a noble person does. It is the right path.

Notice that the word is "received"; they didn't "believe" or "accept" it, they received it. They let the communication happen.

The word "receive" is Strong's 1209, and here's what Vine's has to say (I have underlined what I consider key concepts):

8. *dechomai* (δέχομαι, 1209), "to receive by deliberate and ready reception of what is offered," is used of (a) taking with the hand, taking hold, taking hold of or up, e.g., Luke 2:28, RV, "he received (Him)," KJV, "took he (Him) up"; 16:6, 7; 22:17; Eph. 6:17; (b) "receiving," said of a place "receiving" a person, of Christ into the Heavens, Acts 3:21; or of persons in giving access to someone as a visitor, e.g., John 4:45; 2 Cor. 7:15; Gal. 4:14; Col. 4:10; by way of giving hospitality, etc., e.g., Matt. 10:14, 40 (four times), 41 (twice); 18:5; Mark 6:11; 9:37; Luke 9:5, 48, 53; 10:8, 10; 16:4; v. 9, of reception, "into the eternal tabernacles," said of followers of Christ who have used "the mammon of unrighteousness" to render assistance to ("make ... friends of") others; of Rahab's reception of the spies, Heb. 11:31; of the reception, by the Lord, of the spirit of a departing believer, Acts 7:59; of "receiving" a gift, 2 Cor. 8:4 (in some mss.; RV follows those which omit it); of the favorable reception of testimony and teaching, etc., Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 8:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:13, where *paralambano* (No. 2) is used in the 1st part, "ye received," *dechomai* in the 2nd part, "ye accepted," RV (KJV, "received"), the former refers to the ear, the latter, adding the idea of appropriation, to the heart; Jas. 1:21; in 2 Thess. 2:10, "the love of the truth,:" i.e., love for the truth; cf. Matt. 11:14, "if ye are willing to receive it," an elliptical construction frequent in Greek writings; of "receiving," by way of bearing with, enduring, 2 Cor. 11:16; of "receiving" by way of getting, Acts 22:5; 28:21, of becoming partaker of benefits, Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17; Acts 7:38; 2 Cor. 6:1; 11:4 (last clause "did accept": cf. *lambano* in previous clauses); Phil. 4:18. ¶

*Note:* There is a certain distinction between *lambano* and *dechomai* (more pronounced in the earlier, classical use), in that in many instances *lambano* suggests a self-prompted taking,

whereas *dechomai* more frequently indicates “a welcoming or an appropriating reception” (Grimm-Thayer).<sup>6</sup>

Notice in the underlined sections how this “receiving” shows a willingness to listen, an open posture if you will. Perhaps the word “deference” is an appropriate synonym here with the word submit. Remember that to submit is different than to obey: Submission is more of a posture whereas obedience is an action.

So in summary, I believe scripture is teaching us that we should have a submissive posture of being willing to yield and hear what they have to say. We let them take the lead. It doesn’t mean we agree with them or let them take us for a ride, but we show respect through yielding.

They watch for our souls

The context shows there is a relationship. Again here is our text:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. Hebrews 13:17 - 18

This phrase shows that there ought to be a relationship between the leaders and those they are leading. The leading is not done from a far away office lording over people, but it is done in the trenches where the leaders are walking with others, truly seeing how they are doing and helping them.

Watching for a soul necessitates a relationship. While President Trump is watching for our safety from Washington D.C., there is no way anyone would expect a man with such a distance, physically and politically – to be watching for our souls. That can only be done by someone in close contact with us.

Immediate humility by the Writer

Notice the next verse:

Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.  
Hebrews 13:18

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<sup>6</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 511). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

The Writer immediately takes a humble position of asking for their prayers and admitting that there may be sin in his life that he is unaware of. After he just admonished them about their posture towards leaders, he did not immediately launch into how he wanted to be treated but instead deflected in humility. He trusted he had a good conscience but took no solace in that but instead humbly asked for prayers. And immediately after the Writer uses words of obey and submit, he places himself in a very humble position as one who needs prayer and as one who may have sin in his life that he is not aware of.

Proof positive that leadership in the Kingdom is nothing like leadership in the Gentile world.

### Three: Hebrews 13: 20 - 21

The next verse to consider is this:

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20 - 22

Though this verse does not contain any instructions regarding leaders, the importance to us in our current study is because of its context. The Writer had just mentioned leaders twice in verses 7 and 17, and is about to do it again in verse 24.

Tucked in amongst this conversation about leaders is the reminder that it is not the “ruler’s” job to make congregants sinless or to form them into Christian perfection. Only the Great Shepherd of the sheep can do this. The rulers are not to comb through men’s lives looking for sin and mandating perfection and seeking to lord over them in order to purge sin from the man’s life. Only the God of peace can make us perfect in every good work. Rulers are not to try doing that in others lives.

### Four: 1 Peter 5:1 – 5

The next set of verses we will consider is:

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: 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; 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. 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. 1 Peter 5:1 - 5

While the verses about leaders that we have studied so far are in Hebrews, of which we don't know who the writer was and thus don't know if he was an elder or not, in Peter we have instructions for elders from a man who is not only an apostle but also an elder.

It's interesting how Peter immediately brings in the sufferings of Christ and how Peter mentions that the glory is coming, not now.

### Feed the flock

From this passage we see that the first job of an elder is to feed (shepherd) the flock. The word shepherd is Strong's 4165. Here's what Vine's has to say:

2. *poimaino* (ποιμαίνω, 4165), "to act as a shepherd" (from *pigmen*, "a shepherd"), is used (a) literally, Luke 17:7, RIVE, "keeping sheep," for KEV, "feeding cattle"; 1 Cor. 9:7, (b) metaphorically, "to tend, to shepherd"; said of Christ Matt. 2:6, ROVE, "shall be Shepherd of" (for KAVA, "shall rule"); of those who act as spiritual shepherds under Him, John 21:16, RIVE, "tend" (for KEV "feed"), so 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28, "to feed" ("to tend" would have been a consistent rendering; a shepherd does not only "feed" his flock); of base shepherds, Jude 12. See RULE.

*Note:* In John 21:15, 16, 17, the Lord, addressing Peter, first uses No. 1, *bosko* (v. 15) then No. 2, *poimaino* (v. 16), and then returns to *bosko* (v. 17). These are not simply interchangeable (nor are other variations in His remarks); a study of the above notes will show this. Nor, again, is there a progression of ideas. The lesson to be learnt, as Trench points out (*Syn. Sec.xxv*), is that, in the spiritual care of God's children, the "feeding" of the flock from the Word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place. The tending (which includes this) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals, but they are incidental in comparison with the "feeding."<sup>7</sup>

Their first job is not to lead or rule from a distance but to be near enough to feed. Feeding is their number one job. There is no such thing in scripture of an elder who sits back and rules and has no relationships with those they are seeking to shepherd.

### Those among you

At the risk of vain repetition, once again we see a phrase "those among you" and are reminded of relationship. This phrase denotes walking together. The elder's work is not done from an office far away, but it is done in the trenches – being among them.

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<sup>7</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 231–232). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

## Taking the oversight

The word oversight is Strong's 1983, and here is what Vine's has to say:

*episkopeo* (ἐπισκοπέω, 1983), lit., "to look upon" (*epi*, "upon," *skopeo*, "to look at, contemplate"), is found in 1 Pet. 5:2 (some ancient authorities omit it), "exercising the oversight," RV (KJV, "taking ..."); "exercising" is the right rendering; the word does not imply the entrance upon such responsibility, but the fulfillment of it. It is not a matter of assuming a position, but of the discharge of the duties. The word is found elsewhere in Heb. 12:15, "looking carefully," RV. See LOOK.¶ Cf. *episkope* in 1 Tim. 3:1 (see BISHOP, No. 2).<sup>8</sup>

Once again we see that oversight is not "ruling" as in command and control, but it is tending, it is contemplating carefully those they are shepherding.

## Not by constraint

When Peter says elders should not take the work of an elder because of constraint, he means they should not be unwilling. Which makes sense – who wants an unwilling worker – but this phrase raises an interesting point: If the job was full of glory and honor and prestige and power, then many men would want it. But the fact the apostle says you should not take the job out of constraint (because you are forced to) shows that there is nothing naturally enjoyable about the job; there are no natural benefits of prestige, power, recognition, authority that men in their carnal state would like.

We shall see later that we are reminded to honor elders, and those who rule well deserve double honor. It's not that elders don't deserve honor, it's that the job does not command it due to its nature.

## Neither as being lords

What is being a lord? This word is Strong's 2634, which is related to 2961. Again, here is what Vine's has to say:

1. *kurieuo* (κυριεύω, 2961) denotes "to be lord of, to exercise lordship over," Luke 22:25; Rom. 6:9, 14; 7:1; 14:9; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Tim. 6:15; see DOMINION, B, No. 1.¶
2. *katakurieuo* (κατακυριεύω, 2634), a strengthened form of No. 1, is rendered "lording it" in 1 Pet. 5:3, RV: see DOMINION, B, No. 2.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) (Vol. 2, p. 454). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#) (Vol. 2, p. 380). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

So here the word 2634 is a related word to 2961, and if you remember word 2961 is the word found in Luke 22:25 above. It was used to tell us about how those who rule in God's kingdom are NOT to lord as the Gentiles do. So, once again we see that the elders are not to exercise dominion, control or lording over God's heritage as Gentile rulers would. As we shall see shortly, true elder power comes from being an example.

### God's heritage

For context let's review this verse again.

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: 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; 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. 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. 1 Peter 5:1 - 5

We have made our way to the phrase "God's heritage". Which, once again, is a consistent reminder that the flock belongs truly to God and not the elders. As under-shepherds they are there to serve the Chief Shepherd, again the Chief Shepherd is brought out to highlight their role is subservient to his role. Rather than lording, which is command and control, they are to be examples.

Theirs is a difficult, messy job and so when Christ appears is when they get a crown of glory. This again highlights that their glory is not now - the true prestige and honor is future.

### The younger are admonished to submit

Again, let's review the verse:

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. 1 Peter 5:1 - 5

A fair question is: What does it mean to submit to an elder and then what does it mean to submit to one another? How is that even possible?

The word translated "submit" and "be subject" is the exact same root word. It is Strong's 5293.

So if the exact same root word is used for submitting to elders, and the exact same word is used to all submit to one another – it's clear that what the Apostle is admonishing is quite unusual. In a command and control environment it would be unworkable for everyone to "submit" to one another – nothing would get done.

However, if we have the Kingdom mindset we realize what the Apostle is commanding is deference. Not only to have deference to elders but that the whole culture and mindset of the church, including the elders, is of equal deference to others. It is a matter of culture and stance.

Once again we see that elders do not have the ability to command and control, though they are due deference, and they owe others deference as well.

#### Five: 2 Corinthians 2:6

[Note: One of the men reviewing this document had this to say for this section:

Section five on 2 Cor 2:6, pages 19 and 20: I think you need to rework this or delete it. There is no mention of elders in the Corinthian epistles; Paul's issue was with the assembly, the leaders are not addressed. Excommunication is done by the church, not by a body of elders. Let me know what you think.

Accordingly I will need to rethink this section but keep it for now.]

Though we have seen the scriptures have greatly restricted elder authority, one area elders have undisputed authority is in church excommunication. (I don't use the word discipline on purpose.)

The only case of church excommunication fully documented in scripture is found in 1 and 2 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians the elders were admonished for NOT putting the man out of the church:

It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:1 - 5

However, in response to the Apostle Paul's admonishment, the elders did put the man out – but then the Apostle had to write them again because they were overreaching and not accepting him back.

Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many. So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him. 2 Corinthians 2:6 - 8

This second passage offers some insight into how elders were to exercise excommunication. In 1 Corinthians the Apostle told the elders to put the man out. In 2 Corinthians the Apostle uses the word “sufficient” in referencing their stance towards him. He says the act of excommunication is sufficient punishment for the man. It would seem, then, that the elders were resorting to other methods of punishment other than excommunication and the Apostle tells them to not do that. It is overreach. They had no right to devise methods of punishment and training, etc. By putting the man out, the work in the man's soul would be done outside of the church.

The elders had no ability to discipline like a father would a child. The only tool at their disposal was excommunication, which alone was sufficient.

Another interesting point, is that it seems the church was not willing to recognize the repentance the man had demonstrated. It would not be a stretch of the imagination to think that this man was complaining to others that he was not being treated right, and that others could see the change in the man and also shared his frustrations. When this got to the Apostle's ear he admonished the elders. He did not rebuke the man for complaining and for talking to others about his treatment but rather told the elders to accept the work that was evident in the man's soul.

#### Six: Titus 2:15 – 16

The final set of verses we will examine are the following:

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Titus 2:15 - 16

What does the Apostle mean when he is telling Titus to do something with “all authority”? Looking at the Greek doesn't shed a whole lot of light, at first blush. Here's Vine's:

*epitage* (ἐπιταγή, 2003), an injunction (from *epi*, “upon,” *tasso*, “to order”), is once rendered “authority,” Titus 2:15 (RV, marg. “commandment”). See COMMANDMENT.

*Note:* The corresponding verb is *epitasso*, “to command.” See COMMAND.<sup>10</sup>

Given the totality of what we have studied so far, and that no scripture is of any private interpretation (we must understand each individual scripture considering the scriptures as a whole), it’s clear the Apostle is telling the young Titus: “What you have to say is from God and so don’t be bashful – tell it with authority. And, if you are going to speak forcefully they are going to look at your life, so keep your life straight and don’t give them reason to despise you because that will detract from the message.”

I once heard an ex-pastor quote this verse (and he was fairly young) as though it was a command from the Apostle to DEMAND respect and WIELD authority, and to NOT LET people despise him – all as though he was a gangsta in the hood looking for respect.

That is not at all the teaching.

### Connecting the Dots

There is no doubt that there are more verses we could pull together - but given the totality of these passages it is very clear that the elders’ authority is quite limited and it is to be NOTHING like how Gentiles rule with titles, power, respect, and the brandishing of authority.

Rather the elders are to be humble caretakers who gain influence by walking with the flock and as trust is built their words of admonition are taken seriously – not from a position of authority but because it is apparent that they themselves have careful, exemplary walks and they have demonstrated a deep care for those in the flock through service of hospitality and loving humble acts as washing feet.

The elders have no power to lord over a man’s life in telling him how to live it, and they have no power to monitor it or prescribe courses of action. That would be lording, which is forbidden. They only tool they have is excommunication.

This video by John MacArthur shows great humility and it succinctly encapsulates much of what I have tried to unpack in this document so far:

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<sup>10</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 46). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWq9rJzTdzY>

At the very end of the video he talks about the only authority he has is what is given to him by the Word of God. That is the difference between expansive vs. restrictive authority.

While some forms of authority are expansive (all authority, unless specifically revoked) the elder authority appears to be restrictive (no authority, except what is explicitly given). As we have seen in this document much of the scriptural teaching about elder authority has been about what it is NOT.

## Elders Deserve Honor

After all of this exegesis on elders, it's clear why the Apostle Peter said they were not to take the job out of constraint.

Who would want such a job?

Isn't it encouraging that the Apostle Paul, who was not an elder, wrote this:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward. 1 Timothy 5: 17 - 18

Elders that rule well are worthy of double honor. I think that tells us that even elders who don't rule well are at least due a single dose of honor.

If done well, it's a difficult job.

The word labour is Strong's 2872. Here is what Vine's has to say:

*κοπίω* (κοπιάω, 2872), akin to A, No. 1, has the two different meanings (a) "growing weary," (b) "toiling"; it is sometimes translated "to bestow labor" (see under BESTOW, No. 3). It is translated by the verb "to labor" in Matt. 11:28; John 4:38 (2nd part); Acts 20:35; Rom. 16:12 (twice); 1

Cor. 15:10; 16:16; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:6; Rev. 2:3; 1 Cor. 4:12, RV, "toil" (KJV, "labor"). See TOIL.<sup>11</sup>

It's touching to me to have the word "toil" and "growing weary" be associated with the work of an elder. In my Brethren days I would attend "brothers meetings" (essentially meetings where elder-type decisions are made) and as I witnessed the dear old men, whom I loved and who loved me, having to make not only mundane decisions about finances and running the Meeting but also have to make difficult decisions regarding the status of members, etc. – it is a "thankless" job which exposes them to criticism. But the decisions have to be made by SOMEONE.

I spent 40 years or so in the Tunbridge-Wells group, and some of my favorite memories of older men are of two elders who just trudged it out year after year. I can still feel their love, though one has past on to glory and another one is on the doorstep, and it will be a joy to see them get their crown of glory which fades not away for a job well done as leaders. Theirs was a difficult task.

## Why Does it Matter?

Obviously every subject covered in scripture is important, but why should we care about something as arcane as pastoral authority? Isn't that something elders should worry about and the rest of the congregation should just keep their nose to the grindstone?

Absolutely not. There are a lot of reasons why it matters and below are just some of them.

## Overreach of Power Supplants Christ and Leads to Deadness

It's well known that communist and socialist governments (both of which highlight the power of the state) crowd out God as he is a threat to their own power and aims. While you could argue communism ends in abuse and socialism ends in disarray, the end result of them both is horrible.

The same thing happens in the church. When elder authority is thought highly of it supplants the authority of Christ as the true head of the church. And when that happens a certain deadness enters in.

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<sup>11</sup> Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). [\*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 349). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

Isn't that the connection that the apostle was saying in Colossians 2:16 - 19:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Fully unpacking this section is beyond the scope of this document, but the Apostle was explicitly telling the Colossians to not let overreach happen to them. Don't let people judge you in meat, drink, etc. He was telling them that if they have the Christian liberty to do such things – then do them. Don't let people enter into your life with a different path, one that has “voluntary humility” - because he is actually puffed up in his own mind and is not holding Christ as the true head of the body. This man is making himself important by restricting your Christian liberty. We should emphasize that we are called to actively repel advances by others into our Christian liberty. We do not allow it in the same of ‘getting along’ or ‘submitting to authority’. We repel it.

Our nourishment in the body comes from rightly holding the Head, and when the Head is supplanted a deadness enters because the true nourishment is not flowing. I encourage the reader to consider churches, denominations, etc. where church authority is held high. I think you'll see a correlation between church authority being prominent and a deadness. Think of Catholicism.

### Overreach of Power Discourages Others

As we saw in 2 Corinthians it seems the elders were making two mistakes

- one: refusing to acknowledge the repentance that was obvious to everyone else
- two: seeking to layer additional punishments beyond excommunication

the result was the man would be overcome with sorrow from the mistreatment. Such overreach comes at a cost.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were roundly condemned by Jesus for their lack of morality, their hypocrisy - and also for their spiritual overreach. It actually all goes together:

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. Matthew 23:4

How do we know this was religious overreach? Because Jesus says his burden is light but here Jesus says the burdens the pharisees laid out was grievous to be borne. They were overreaching by installing their own rules – not Jesus’ rule - and Jesus eviscerated them for it. He didn’t appreciate it and he didn’t think it was just fine to be so “conservative”.

Pastoral overreach discourages others - whether it was with the pharisees or with the Corinthians - it is always wrong and it is always discouraging.

### Overreach Eventually Supplants the Word

When God’s authority is diminished and man’s authority is exalted, man’s rules become more important than God’s.

This happened in Jesus’ day where the religious leaders developed all sorts of rules – so many rules that eventually their own rules made the Word of God of none effect.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. Mark 7: 9 - 13

When man’s authority is made much of, which the Pharisees and Sadducees did, then eventually the height of our vision is not God’s standards, but man’s.

Don’t let overreach happen to you.