

James T. Jeremiah
Devotional Session
September 11, 1979

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Will you open your Bibles, please, this morning to first Peter five, and during these three mornings I want to sort of talk about the ministry as Peter outlines it. Let's read first Peter five, one to nine, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I'm also an elder, and a witness to 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 is being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. May all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility. For God resisted the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

James T. Jeremiah:

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the Devil, is a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

James T. Jeremiah:

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this portion of thy word today. We pray to encourage us and help us to see something of the great privilege we have as pastors, as preachers, in serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Encourage hearts we pray in this conference, challenge all of us to be better servants of the Lord. We pray in Jesus name, amen.

James T. Jeremiah:

I've been thinking about these verses, it occurs to me that in this passage of scripture we have something about the thrills, the temptations and the triumphs of the ministry. Peter refers to the pastor in three different terms, as you'll note in this passage. He defines what a pastor is, what a preacher is. He talks about them as being elders. You take the phrase, "Shepherd the flock.", or, "Feed the flock.", that has reference to the pastor. Then he talks about being a bishop, or an overseer. It's interesting to me that in spite of the fact that we have some Baptal Presbyterians running loose these days with boards of elders that the apostle Peter refers to the elder as being a pastor and a bishop, the bishop being a pastor and an elder.

James T. Jeremiah:

When Paul gave the qualifications of the church officers, he referred to bishops, pastors, elders, and deacons. As we take these terms, I think that they can apply to any pastor, regardless of his age. The elder has the thought of maturity, and it is possible to be mature in the service of the Lord when you're 30. The fact of the matter is, this is the kind of the pastor most churches want. One deacon wrote to me several years ago and said, "We'd like to have a pastor, if you can find one, 30 years of age with 25 years of experience." He was one of the few church officers that I've heard from that really was honest about it. That's what they all want.

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Maturity from the standpoint of an elder, responsibility from the standpoint of the pastor, to feed the flock. That denotes, according to Vincent, all that is included in the office. It has to do with guiding, and guarding, and feeding, holding, he says, and there's a lot more to pastoring than preaching, as we well know. Several words used for the idea of feeding one, two of them are play on words in John 21, as you well are aware, but here the responsibility is to feed the flock. Then the thought of bishop seems to me suggests the concept of authority, taking the oversight. Paul refers to ruling well, not lording it over, as Peter suggests, but leading and feeding the flock.

James T. Jeremiah:

Incidentally, when Peter refers to himself as a fellow elder, he sort of repudiates the primacy of Peter. That may be a shock to some people who think that he was the first primate, or the first pope. He refers to himself as one of the people who considers, who are called of God to be elders. The mornings that we're going to talk about this, I'd like to suggest that first of all, in verses one to three, Peter gives us something about the opportunity of being a servant of God, or being a pastor, elder, bishop, whatever you want to call it, same term. In these verses of scripture, he gives us a little outline of this responsibility. What we do, how we do it, why we do it, and for whom we do it.

James T. Jeremiah:

First of all, he talks about what we do, our mission. We are to shepherd the flock. That is to lead, feed and not bleed the flock. Sometimes the bleeding can be material. Sometimes when we get somebody that we want to bleed, we really tear in to the whole flock to get one sheep. They tell me that it's necessary on occasion for wandering sheep to have a leg broken. That may be true, but no shepherd breaks the legs of everybody in his flock. It's important that we shepherd the flock. Then, we are to exercise oversight. I don't think there's any question about it, that this is the responsibility of a God-called shepherd of the flock have oversight. The idea of authority is not one that's taken in a dictatorial manner, but it's one none the less that involves leadership.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's important that we shepherd the flock. This is what we do, this is our business. I've often thought of the phrase in Acts where the writer of Acts refers to the concept of giving ourselves to the prayer and the ministry of the word. Ministry of the word involves other things, it seems to me, than just spending four or five hours in the morning time, and studying, and then not ministering the word after we've been prepared to ministry it, shepherding the flock. It's interesting, too, that we have a clear cut message to give to our people as we shepherd and teach, different than Herman Melville's description of the Christian gospel. He says that it is a volume bound in rose leaves, clasped with violets and by the beaks of hummingbirds, printed with peach juice on leaves of lilies. Isn't that wonderful?

James T. Jeremiah:

The only thing is, it doesn't say anything about what we ought to be doing. We can't shepherd the flock, take the oversight, with that kind of a milk and toast concept of the ministry. How we are to do it, the method involved, three words I think will sum it up, willingly, not under compulsion. We are under compulsion in the sense we're called of God to minister the word, but we ought not to be under compulsion from any natural source or means. This is the thing we do in order to improve society, or this is the thing we do because, as one pastor friend of mine said, he wanted to be a pastor because he

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could wear a white shirt. Poor fellow is out of date now, and no preacher wants to wear a white shirt. Not that kind of thing, but willingly.

James T. Jeremiah:

Paul refers to this, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." He was compelled by the Lord to do it, but that was the main compulsion. Doing it obediently, under the mighty hand, under the mighty hand of God. According to God, really. God's calling, as we all know so well, the importance of it. I remember reading somewhere about a preacher in a little country church, and he was not an orator by any means, but he was a faithful preacher, and he was giving the gospel as clearly and plainly as he knew how.

James T. Jeremiah:

When the service was over, one of the deacons, or officials of the church, came and said, "Pastor, you should have been more careful in the way you talked this morning. There was a man here in this church today of great importance in this community, hasn't been in the church at all. Man of wealth, and a man of means. You ought to consider that he was here." This man very frankly said, "Long before I pastored this church, long before I knew there was a man of any means in this community, I recognized the importance of doing my preaching with someone present far greater than he ever could be. I preach with a concept in mind that in my audience God is present, the almighty God, and I will preach like that no matter who comes." I like that.

James T. Jeremiah:

Do it submissively, be subjected one to another, with humility toward one another. The older I get the more I like the idea of submitting to the elder. That isn't what it really says, because it has reference to subjecting one to another. By the way, in Ephesians, where we have that phrase used again, a good exhortation is be subject, one to another. Not like the preacher who one time was arguing with a fellow preacher. Finally, after some debate, this man, the humble one of the crowd, said, "All right, all right. You have it your way, and I'll do it the Lord's way." That's not what it means. It means just the opposite of that, doing it submissively.

James T. Jeremiah:

Why we do it, what's our motive? Not for sordid gain. I don't suppose anybody in this crowd would be guilty of being a minister for what they could get out of it, but there are things, of course, that could be our objective. There are a lot of verses that I'd like to look on with regard to this today, "You ought to do it not for sordid gain, but do it with eagerness." That ought to be our motive, exciting. There's something thrilling about preaching the gospel to me, I don't know if it is to you. I've never gotten away from this. Something thrilling about getting out the message, being assured that you're a representative, a voice from heaven, as God enables you to give it. Doing it with eagerness, why we do it. Not for what we get out of it, but to please the Lord, and because we have an eager spirit, ready to do the thing that God would have us do. "As much as in me is.", said Paul, "I'm ready to preach the gospel."

James T. Jeremiah:

Last of all, let's think about it for whom we do it. That's the ministry. Those allotted to your charge, or God's heritage, those allotted to our charge. Puts a little dignity in the ministry when we recognize that the people making up our congregation are God's allotment to us, God's charge, God's heritage to us. These are the people God has given us, and this is our opportunity. Of course, he refers to it as the flock,

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the flock of God. For whom we do it. Somebody said, "Well, I do it for the Lord." Yes, I know, but we do it also for the flock, for the people, God's heritage, God's allotment to us. Spurgeon said one time, concerning some preachers he knew, he said, "God called us to feed the sheep." He said, "Some of you are thinking yourselves qualified to feed giraffes." The food was so high they couldn't get it, so far out they couldn't reach it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Sheep have a difficult time stretching their necks that far. We're responsible to recognize that God has given us this allotment, and God wants us to be faithful to that charge. Someone prayed once, preacher prayed, "Lord, do something for us today that's not written in the bulletin." That would be exceptional, wouldn't it? Unusual. By the way, we're having lectures on management. I have an announcement from the management regarding the bulletins, "You may have noticed the increased amount of notices for you to notice. Some of our notices have not been noticed. This is very noticeable. It has been noticed that the responses to the notices have been noticeably unnoticed. This notice is to remind you to notice the notices, and respond to the notices, because we do not want the notices to go unnoticed." Lord, do something for us not written in the bulletin.

James T. Jeremiah:

Tomorrow we'll talk about another aspect of it briefly. We want to spend some time in prayer, and you have some requests, so let's have them, and we'll pray together. It's early in the morning, but let's not wait, because we only have about 10 or 15 minutes. We want to spend time praying for things that are upon your heart. I think you need to pray for Cedarville College. In a few days the hoards will be coming in, and it's going to be a crowded place. We have tents out here now for them, you see them being built. That's a good sign, when you have to put up things like that to house students. I don't know what the enrollment will be, maybe 1300, hope so. Pray for the faculty, and for the staff and for Doctor Dixon. I can talk about praying for the president these days. I know something about the burden he carries, and I hope you'll pray for him, and for those who are working here with him. I'm going to help him. I'm leaving town Thursday to be gone for six weeks.

James T. Jeremiah:

Anyone with a prayer request other than what I've given? Don't forget to pray for that. Who will pray for the school this morning. Let's have some definite praying here. Way back here in the back, someone raised his hand. Okay. Someone else now with a request? Yes, sir.

Speaker 2:

A deacon's wife is ill.

James T. Jeremiah:

All right. The deacon's wife who's been stricken with cancer with three to six months to live. Okay, you pray for, thank you. Who else now? Yes.

Speaker 3:

We have a young couple with a two month old baby that has been diagnosed a hemophiliac.

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Two month boy in prayer. Very seriously ill. Who'll take that request? Hemophiliac. Somebody? Thank you. Okay. Any other needs now? We want to pray for you. We want to pray for one another. Yes.

Speaker 4:

I have a son that seems to be returning to the Lord.

James T. Jeremiah:

Want prayer for him?

Speaker 4:

Yes, please.

James T. Jeremiah:

A pastor's son who's needing prayer. He's coming back to the Lord. Let's pray for him. Who'll pray for this preacher's son? Okay, right here. Pray for other preachers' sons, too, that are in need. Thank the Lord for those who are serving the Lord, and pray for those who've come back to serve Him. Anyone else? Yes, two of you.

Speaker 5:

We have a young man in Bethesda North Hospital that was shot in the chest while cleaning his revolver. He's in intensive care right now. They're not going to take the bullet out because some shaving hit his lung. We should pray for -

James T. Jeremiah:

Is he a Christian boy?

Speaker 5:

Yes, he is. 18 years old.

James T. Jeremiah:

18 year old boy had an accident, shot in the chest with a revolver. Somebody pray for this. Okay. All right, there was one down here.

Speaker 6:

I have reached a crisis with my deacon board, and I think we should pray for my Lord's wisdom in dealing with it.

James T. Jeremiah:

All right. Pray for this pastor and the church. Crisis with the deacon board. Who'll remember that in prayer? All right, here. We better start praying. Let's look to the Lord now in prayer, and pray briefly, pointedly, and so everybody can hear, too, please.

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