
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study
by Warren Doud

Lesson 317: **Acts 20:25-38**

ACTS, Lesson 317, Acts 20:25-38

Contents

Acts 20:25-38..... 3
 Acts 20:25 3
 Acts 20:26,27 3
 Acts 20:28 3
 Acts 20:29 4
 Acts 20:30,31 4
 Acts 20:32 5
 Acts 20:33-35 5
 Acts 20:36-38 6
Biblical Exegesis And Exposition 6
Inheritance..... 11
Shepherds of the Flock of God 12

Acts 20:25-38**Acts 20:25**

And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Paul knew that it was very unlikely that he would be coming back to Asia, in any case. He had preached everywhere in Asia, and he must now leave further ministry to the men and women whom he and the disciples had trained. Paul doesn't know the future, so, like us, he can only surmise what will happen to him. So he says, in effect, "I have no expectation of seeing you again; I have every reason to suppose that this is my final interview with you".

In the future, when he is in Rome, Paul will write (to the Philippians and to Philemon) of his hopes of coming east again.

Phil. 2:19-24. But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.

Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things *go* with me; and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

Philemon 1:21,22. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.

At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you.

Acts 20:26,27

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Wherefore I take you to record

The phrase "take you to record" uses the Greek word (**marturomai**), which means "to witness" or "to testify". So the phrase it "I call to witness".

that I am pure from the blood of all men

Compare this from Paul's ministry in Corinth:

Acts 18:5,6. But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Paul considers that, when he has thoroughly presented the claims of the gospel, and when the truth has been summarily rejected by his listeners, he has done as much as humanly possible to witness for Christ.

Acts 20:28

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.

Here Paul passes the guidon to his "officers", those people who now have the responsibility for evangelism and edification in the local church. He has, as he advised Titus to do in a later epistle, "ordained elders in every city as I directed you" (**Titus 1:5**).

In the New Testament, the teaching minister in a local church is variously known as an elder (**presbuteros**), overseer (bishop) (**episkopos**),

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 4
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

steward (**oikonomos**), pastor (**poimen**), or teacher (**didaskolos**).

to feed the flock of God

The Bible is the only source of knowledge of how to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as “love at first sight” in spiritual things. The believer must get to know Christ very well, and this requires the daily intake of knowledge about Christ through the Word of God, which is “the mind of Christ.” Spiritual teachers are vital in the local church to guide people in the Scriptures and help them grow in grace.

1 Peter 5:1,2. “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”

People come to a Bible church to grow in Christ and to develop the ability to solve their problems and to make decisions according to divine viewpoint. Good teaching takes all the technical data and presents Bible truth in a form that sheep can understand and apply.

The pastor who knows how to feed sheep will have sheep. If he does not have a consistent growing flock, he may presume (1) there are no sheep in the community, or (2) my lecturing from pulpit is not feeding the flock.

TOPIC: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK OF GOD

TOPIC: BIBLE EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION

TOPIC: IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

TOPIC: LOCAL CHURCH

Acts 20:29

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Paul is not talking about his death; he is saying “As soon as I leave here, the local churches of which you are overseers are going to have an invasion of false teachers who will try to destroy your flock.”

John 1:12,13. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*.

He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.”

In these verses (29 to 31), Paul is urging these men to be good elders, not only teaching Bible truth but also being alert for aggressive attacks of false teachers.

Acts 20:30,31

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Wolves in sheep’s clothing can, and often do, arise from the congregation itself. There is always the danger that someone in a church will form a conspiracy against the church leadership, based upon some error in doctrine, and try to build a mutual admiration society from gullible people who can be enlisted.

Paul recorded that these things occurred often, in Colossians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy. False philosophy, immorality, legalism, asceticism, can lead people astray.

Col. 2:8. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Eph. 4:11-14. And he gave some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 5
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Eph. 5:6,7. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore do not be partakers with them;

Acts 20:32

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

which is able to build you up

Greek (**to dunamenoioikodomeisai**), "which has the power to edify you".

Edification is the process of spiritual growth in a Christian who is living according to the plan of God and who is fulfilling the command to grow in the grace and in knowledge of Jesus Christ. See the following passages:

Rom. 14:19

2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10

Eph. 4:12, 16

1 Cor. 14:5, 12

In all these passages, edification has two meanings.

1. Collectively it refers to the building up of the body of Christ. In Eph. 4:16, you can see that the edification of individuals results in the building up of the church.

2. For individual believers, edification refers to the spiritual growth and momentum in the Christian way of life, resulting in the glorification of God.

When the collective connotation is used, (**oikodome**) should be translated "construction", the building up or building process. When the individual connotation is used, (**oikodome**) should be translated "edification".

Paul's lays the responsibility directly on the Ephesian elders. for edifying individuals and building the church.

TOPIC: EDIFICATION

and give you an inheritance

TOPIC: INHERITANCE

Acts 20:33-35

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

One of the slanders against Paul was that when he was raising collections for the poor, that the money was really for himself.

2 Cor. 12:17,18. Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I?

I urged Titus *to go*, and I sent the brother with him. Titus [who was collecting money for the believers in poverty] did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit *and walk* in the same steps?

Certainly the elders from Ephesus knew that the church at Ephesus had not supported Paul.

Paul was familiar with manual labor, and he shows his own hands in pride as proof that he worked at tent making, as he had at Corinth and Thessalonica, not only for himself but also for those who traveled with him.

Paul provided an example for them, and for all believers, and had consistently given them an object lesson of hard work

Eph. 4:28. ...he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.

This verse raises the question of just how much Paul personally knew of the life and sayings of Jesus. He could certainly have learned a great deal about Jesus' teaching and ministry from those who had been with Christ during his lifetime, men such as Peter, James, John. He would certainly have always been eager to know as much as possible about what the Lord had to say during His lifetime.

Acts 20:36-38

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Biblical Exegesis And Exposition ¹

Chester McCalley ²

¹ Portions of this article are taken from "Biblical Exegesis and Exposition", by Pastor Chester McCalley, published in the Journal of Chafer Theological Seminary in 2002. [I have done some rewording and editing, but not so much, I think, as to have altered Chester's point of view or intention. Warren Doud]

² The late Chester McCalley was the pastor of Beth Haven Church in Kansas City for 40 years. He was on

Introduction

What is the relationship between exegesis and exposition? What is Bible exposition or expository preaching? This article gives a method for moving from exegesis to expository preaching. Think of a tower with two spigots: high and low.

Exegesis is the **top** spigot; exposition is at the **bottom**. The pastor using exegesis deals with Greek and Hebrew syntax, hermeneutics, theological arguments, and so forth. Exegesis (the high spigot) discovers the text's meaning.

But the pulpit is for teaching our congregations. Teaching from the high spigot lays our exegetical work before the congregation. Teaching from the low spigot permits teaching to flow from a level more comprehensible to the flock. Our objective is to communicate Bible truth, not to drown people in the depths of our technical analysis.

A pastor must start with exegesis of the text, before seeking to communicate and illustrate it. One cannot communicate Bible exposition clearly and accurately without first discovering what the text means. A pastor must know the passage's exegetical truth, but that truth *should be communicated in expository language*. Many people do not understand when teaching is from one's exegetical notes. Further preparation is required to produce expository teaching that the whole congregation can understand.

When pastors do not understand this—I speak as one who has made this mistake, and it is a mistake—they [sometimes come to a premature conclusion]: "I taught a hundred people for a year, giving them good stuff! Now, we are down to fifteen, proving how negative people are to doctrine."

the National Board of Advisors of Chafer Theological Seminary, a frequent Bible conference speaker, and author of many publications and tapes, which are still available.

Are there people who are negative to Bible doctrine? Certainly; but a pastor ought to go back to the drawing board and ask, "Does my study move from exegesis down to expository teaching? Does everyone really understand the teaching?" If not, the pastor certainly bears the blame. The pastor is responsible both for teaching both children and his parents, both novice believers and advanced Christians? Yes, indeed, a shepherd cares for both adult sheep and lambs.

Exegesis: Exposition's Foundation

The foundation of exposition is exegesis, but what is exegesis?

Exegesis is the process of determining the meaning of a text of Scripture, the word of God. It is important to understand how to determine the meaning of a Bible passage. Sometimes people think that they can simply read the Bible, ask, "How does this apply to me?", and decide for themselves how to apply it. But application, though essential, is the last step in a process that begins with careful exegesis.

Moreover, one must base one's understanding upon the text's meaning to the original audience, in the language and the culture in which it was spoken. The objective meaning must be the focus. Exegesis is to "lead forth", to let the word speak for itself. Imposing a sermon on the Bible (not letting it speak) is *eisegesis* (reading into God's word). The basis of a pastor's teaching to a congregation is the meaning that comes from Scripture.

The word *exegesis* (or *exegete*) occurs six times in the New Testament.

Usage of this word-group in Scripture is more useful than any definition that a dictionary may offer. Context is the key. What is the Biblical concept for the word (**exēgeomai** "to exegete")?

Luke 24:35 "And they (began) to **relate** (**exēgeomai**) their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread."

Here, two disciples met Jesus on the road to Emmaus. After walking with them, He broke bread and they recognized Him. The disciples began to relate something to others. The word relate is *exegete* (**exēgeomai**).

The New King James Version translates the word as "told": "And they **told** about the things that had happened on the road... "

The disciples began to tell or relate their experiences on the road and how they recognized Jesus during a meal.

Exegesis deals with objective truth, because what they said was true. They began to *exegete* or tell about their objective experiences. It refers to explaining objective truth.

John 1:18 "No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has **explained** (**exēgeomai**) Him."

The New American Standard Bible translates the verb "explained" as "has explained."

The New King James Version assigns the meaning "told" in Luke, but now uses "declared" in John 1:18, ... He has declared Him.

Did Christ give a subjective or objective explanation of the Father? Again, this is objective truth!

Acts 10:8 ... and after he had **explained** everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

An angel explained to Cornelius that he should arrange for Peter to meet him. Cornelius gathered like-minded men together after the angel had explained [*exegeted*] everything to them....

Acts 15:12, 14 "And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were **relating** what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles..."

"Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name."

The New King James Version uses **declaring** and **declared** for **relating** and **related**. Paul

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 8
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

and Barnabas relate or declare (exegete) certain facts at the Jerusalem Council (verse 12). Paul related objective signs and wonders? Simon Peter does likewise in verse 14. Peter related/exegeted objective facts.

Exegeting a text explains objective truth or fact.

Acts 21:19, “And after he had greeted them, he (began) to *relate* one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Again, the New King James Version uses a slightly different translation: “... he *told in detail* those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

Paul objectively related or told (exegeted) what God had done among the Gentiles during his evangelistic journeys.

Conclusion: exegesis refers to the explaining, declaring, telling, or relating of objective truth.

Now, what elements of exegesis are necessary for an accurate textual meaning?

Elements of Exegesis

LANGUAGE

Why should a pastor examine the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament? The strongest claim made by the Bible is this: Thus saith the Lord (“This is God speaking”). The Old Testament uses similar expressions about 3800 times. The reminder that “This is God’s word” appears an average of four times per page.

The fact that Scripture is God’s word means, even dictates, that we ought to be careful and precise in studying it. Exegesis requires examining original languages.

My [Chester’s] first Greek class motivated me to do scholarly work, but to **avoid parading it**. Students always made it a point to be early to that class (a five hour course), not to get on the front row, but the last row. Dr. Brunner, the beginning Greek teacher, had been an assistant to A. T. Robertson, so no one wanted to answer his questions in class. He was too awe-inspiring. He did not need to carry a New Testament,

because he had memorized it. Good texts, grammars, and lexical tools exist for the rest of us! Our congregations need teaching that results from solid scholarship, but we should not make our abilities seem unapproachable. Rather than intimidating the flock, we should challenge and equip them for the work of ministry.

Expository preaching never implies sacrificing exegesis. For those who share our belief in the absolute authority of the Scripture, the accuracy of little things argues strongly for careful study. The gospel record sometimes focuses on little things. Consider Matthew 26:16: “So from that time he (Judas) sought opportunity to betray Him”. Matthew consistently uses (**paradidōmi**, “to betray”) to describe the act of Judas in betraying Jesus (cf. Matthew 10:4; 26:16, 21, 46; 27:3). The one who betrays (in Matthew) is always singular.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter makes a fascinating point (Acts 3:13a). He also uses **paradidōmi**, but this passage is different. Peter preaches and says, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, the one whom you (plural) delivered up (**paradidōmi**) and disowned... ”

You delivered up is the same word, but it is a second person plural you! Whereas Matthew spoke of betrayal as the singular act of Judas, Peter addresses the nation saying, “You (plural).” In one sense the act uniquely belongs to Judas, but it is also the whole nation’s responsibility. A change to the plural reveals this. Pastors ought to respect the word of God, painstakingly interpreting its words.

SOUND HERMENEUTICS

Although sound hermeneutics is the foundation of accurate exegesis, some interpretive systems distort the literal meaning.

The most common method of destructive hermeneutics is allegorizing (spiritualizing). This makes the literal meaning subordinate to the supposedly superior allegorical meaning.

An example of this disastrous method is the Epistle of Barnabas, a veritable loose cannon of speculation. He merely uses Moses as a springboard.

Now, in that Moses said, "Ye shall not eat swine, nor an eagle, nor a hawk, nor a crow, nor any fish which has no scales on itself," he included three doctrines in his understanding.

Moreover he says to them in Deuteronomy, "And I will make a covenant of my ordinances with this people (emphasis mine)."

What are those doctrines to which the Epistle of Barnabas refers? He introduces them with the phrase "he means".

So then the ordinance of God is not abstinence from eating, but Moses spoke in the spirit. He mentioned swine for this reason: you shall not consort, he means, with men who are like swine [who forget the Lord when they have plenty to eat]... "Neither shalt thou eat the eagle, nor the hawk, nor the kite, nor the crow." Thou shalt not, he means, joint thyself to such men [who do not work, but steal from others (emphasis mine)]... .

The writer's (supposedly Barnabas) interpretive errors are rife. As a start, he: (1) denies that God literally forbade eating certain animals, (2) allegorizes "eating" into "associating with," (3) allegorizes various animals into classes of people.

His approach lacks hermeneutical controls. Not only does he speculate about theology, but biology, "For this animal [the weasel] gives birth with its mouth."

The lesson is that we must be more careful than the Epistle of Barnabas in interpretation.

Allegorizing is not the only type of interpretive problem. It is also easy to distort the historical meaning with a parallel-passage approach (saying, "Let's go over to this passage"). When Dr. Merrill Unger taught the book of Zechariah, he would not allow us to use a typical Hebrew Bible. It seemed crazy to buy Zechariah bound separately. He said, "Read Zechariah with reference only to Zechariah. Cross-reference is

fine, but not now. Read it only with reference to Zechariah." This is insightful. Other methods try to read Ephesians into Exodus, intra-biblical eisegesis: reading Scripture into non-parallel Scriptures.

Teaching emphatically from the text and emphasizing doctrine eventually causes a congregation to ask, "How do you know that this is what it means? What is the proof? Is the whole world wrong and you alone are right? What says that this interpretation is correct? That is not the way my denomination interprets it! Are we not all free to interpret as we wish?" Interpreting as one wishes reduces God's word to a subjective, confusing thing. The congregation must be able to say, "I can prove what it means." The congregation's growth in this area is an important aspect of the saints being equipped to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12). How one interprets Scripture is a crucial issue.

Again, sound hermeneutics are essential to proper exegesis.

Expression or Exposition

A good definition of Bible exposition is: **The process of translating careful exegesis into food for sheep.** Scholarly work in exegesis is necessary, but we are not here to impress scholars. We have congregations that come for food.

People come to a Bible church to grow in Christ and to develop the ability to solve their problems and to make decisions according to divine viewpoint. Exposition takes all the technical data and presents Bible truth in a form that sheep can understand and apply.

The pastor who knows how to feed sheep will have sheep. If he does not have a consistent growing flock, he ought to look at one of two things. Perhaps he needs to assume responsibility and say, "Perhaps, my thinking about exposition needs to change."

Many Bible churches have a revolving door. People come to a Bible church expecting to be fed; many leave because the spiritual food

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 10
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

developed by scholarly exegesis is not served as nourishing meals. Just because people come only sporadically on Sundays or do not return, should we suppose they are negative to doctrine? It is important for a pastor to say, "Perhaps, I am not converting my exegesis into food for them. Perhaps, my message uses a spigot that is too high on the tower." This is a problem that pastors cannot ignore.

Summarizing, **exegesis** has to do with determining the truth of the text.

Exposition follows by converting the technical matters into concepts that are readily grasped. This is an added workload for the pastor, perhaps adding as much as 50% to the time required to prepare lessons; but the pastor is ready to present the truth determined by exegesis.

Clarity Is Essential to Presentation

Clarity is achieved by collecting the results of the scholarly exegesis then reducing that material to the simple declarations that communicate the truth. The purpose of teaching is not to confuse or impress. The task is to communicate! It is difficult to present the pure exegesis as clear and accurate exposition. Spend time on "translating" the esoteric doctrines into the "language" of the people.

Should one preach grammatical terms? They can be meaningless, even for many people who know them. What is a Hebrew *casus pendens*, or a Greek aorist passive?

Must every sheep be told every point of grammar or technical syntax? "This is a *casus pendens*"? How edifying! Who needs to know that! Take the names of the cases, for example, *genitive*. What does *genitive* mean to most people? Shouldn't we translate a technical genitive construction into something people understand? All those good Latin terms, such as *accusative of general reference* or *dative of advantage* are just not part of the sheep's vocabulary.

While a good exegete needs to know these things, as an expositor he must focus on making

clear what he has exegetically determined from the text.

A professor said, "After making a beautiful cabinet, what should the carpenter display? His tools or his workmanship?" Proper description of the results of using language tools is far more important than trying to get people to understand the language tools themselves.

Similarly, when you use the tools to create a good meal, serve the meal, not the tools. Who would enjoy a dinner consisting of a raw piece of steak, a stick of butter, a pan, some garlic and sliced mushrooms? Are those things essential? Absolutely, but despite our imagination, they are not a meal until the steak is barbecued and the mushrooms sautéed. Likewise, exposition must display the end result of careful exegesis in a way that the congregation can recognize as food. Otherwise, much less edification takes place.

Compassion

Effective exposition may contrast truth with compassion against truth that lacks it. For example, in Acts chapter 9, did God answer Ananias' wrong thinking with truth alone? Or, do Acts 9:11-13 communicate truth with compassion? "So the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.' And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.'"

In effect, Ananias says: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints in Jerusalem... and (by inference) do You think I will go to his house?" That deserves rebuke, does it not? He rebelled against divine viewpoint by challenging divine wisdom.

God says none of those things, but instead gives Ananias a little more truth to correct his ignorance.

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. " For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

"Go... ." repeats truth. "Let Me give you reasons. Let Me support why you ought to do this. I am not going to rebuke your lack of wisdom, or your resisting My viewpoint. He is a chosen vessel, a chosen instrument to Me. He shall bear My name before the Gentiles." Ananias went.

God did not sternly give truth without compassion, saying "Ananias, you rebel, you are rejecting truth." Neither did He express compassion without truth, saying, "Ananias, I understand and would be scared spitless, too. Thank you for listening. Thank you for letting Me share this with you, but I will choose someone else." The message was both compassionate and truthful. It corrected him without destroying him.

God presented truth with compassion. Likewise, it is important that a pastor stand for truth, but have some feeling and some compassion for his sheep. What does compassion have to do with communication? 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says that it has everything to do with it.

When we are not compassionate, it shows. People understand this well. We must not only determine what the passage teaches (exegesis), but we must communicate it compassionately and clearly. It is God's part to prepare the hearers to receive that meal and (by it) to grow.

Those who hear us may include spiritual giants and those who have no background in the Bible. Give the poor soul coming for the first time a break! The fact that he found the church door may indicate that he has already overcome tremendous barriers. After all, sleep is so wonderful on Sunday morning. Give this poor fellow credit for hoping, "Maybe they can teach

me something." He is looking to you for some teaching that clarifies.

What happens if the pastor's philosophy of the Sunday morning message is: "The name of this game is exegesis." The new believers says, "What is that?" Opening a spigot that is too high can still bless the spiritual giant. He is impressed because the pastor digs into the Word. However, that message does not do anything positive for the novice or the babe in Christ. A balance is necessary. Preaching should challenge the spiritual giants without neglecting those who are biblically illiterate.

Do not neglect exegesis. Do not lower the standards, but raise them by increasing your ability to exposit. Go deeper, but learn how to open the spigot a little bit lower. This is enormously helpful in the exposition of the Word of God. It may improve your ministry. It may even lead to saying, "Maybe he was not so negative to doctrine. Maybe he just did not understand what I was trying to say." It is our responsibility to find out exactly what the Bible means and to communicate that message clearly and accurately. We must both exegete and exposit. Unless we translate exegesis into exposition our message is as a sounding brass: Only the pastor, and a few well-educated advanced believers, receive edification. Exposition translates exegesis into the language of the sheep and the lambs. Then and only then are the sheep fed.

Inheritance

We have an inheritance from God the Father because we share the destiny of Christ. The main feature of the doctrine of predestination is that we share Christ's destiny.

Eph. 1:11. also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and as the victor in the spiritual conflict, is the heir of all things. Heb. 1:1-4

Inheritance is based on son-ship:

John 1:12. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

Rom. 8:16, 17. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Gal. 3:26-29, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

"And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

To inherit from God, a person must possess the life of God, that is, salvation resulting in eternal life.

Titus 3:5-7, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"

"whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,"

"that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

1 John 5:11, 12, "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."

Therefore, salvation is the qualification for inheriting from God. Col. 1:9-14

As joint heirs with Christ, we also share Christ's election.

Heb. 9:15, "And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Our heritage is related to the doctrine of eternal security.

1 Pet. 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

"to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,"

"who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance. Eph. 1:14
Abraham's inheritance is the pattern and illustration of the heritage of believers as described in Romans 4:9-16.

Shepherds of the Flock of God

Introduction

1 Peter 5:1,2 "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:"

Deuteronomy 8:3, "And he humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live."

We live by God's Word, that which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

And it is our shepherds who have the duty to provide us with this nourishment, lest we waste away in spiritual malnutrition!

My aim in this article is to provide a thorough introduction to the Bible concept of shepherding, from Jehovah and the Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd, to the Christian believer who feeds and cares for the "sheep of His pasture."

Pastors and elders are shepherds. The Greek word (**poimeinos**), used a single time in the New Testament in Ephesians 4:11, is translated "pastor". On other occasions, such as in 1 Peter 5:2, the verb form (**poimeinw**) is translated "to feed". So pastors and elders are "feeders", and Christians are the "flock" which are to be fed.

I intend in this article to develop a full description of what a Christian spiritual shepherd is, including a shepherd's qualifications and duties. This description will be derived from a study of what the whole Bible says about shepherds, by examining the following:

- Jehovah as Shepherd
- The Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd
- King David as shepherd of his people. He was both a shepherd-boy and the shepherd of the kingdom of Israel
- Pastors and elders, including all those who "feed the flock of God"

I think that the Bible passages I cite in this study will demonstrate that there are well laid out Bible standards for the function of shepherd, and that when one is known a true shepherd of the sheep, certain objective criteria have been met.

Titus was given the task of choosing shepherds (elders) for the local congregations on the island of Crete. When choosing a shepherd, it's important to have a good idea of what God intends a shepherd to be.

To illustrate:

- A good shepherd puts the needs of the sheep first, and has an abiding sense of obligation toward them. One who does not know how to care for sheep, or who neglects sheep, is not a good shepherd.
- A good shepherd leads sheep to good pasture and water. A person who does not provide food and water for sheep is not a good shepherd.
- A good shepherd protects the sheep and sets up defenses against those who would harm the sheep. An individual who deliberately harms or frightens sheep is not a good shepherd.

Jehovah as Shepherd

There is a chain of command in Christian affairs. In a chain of command, such as in a military organization, when one level of command fails to function properly, the responsibility is taken over by the next higher level of command.

God the Father, Jehovah, is always watching His sheep; and He is always ready to take over when the sheep are not being well handled by their appointed shepherds..

READ Jeremiah 10:19-22

[I will show scripture passages to illustrate these ideas, but it's up to you to examine the whole context of the discussion in any passage I cite. Be aware that the verses I indicate are only pointers to a broader portion of the Bible that needs to be reviewed in context.]

Suggestion: read the whole book of Jeremiah from the standpoint of shepherds, good and bad, and their duties toward their "sheep." But especially read:

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Jeremiah 50:4-19

Psalms 23

Isaiah 44:24-28

Even a heathen king, Cyrus, was named shepherd, to fulfill a specific function, to contribute to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

READ Ezekiel 34.

From C. F. Keil, Commentary on Ezekiel

The shepherds of Israel, namely, the political and religious leaders, have been feeding themselves and neglecting the flock. The flock has been scattered and has become a prey to wild beasts. The Lord will remove the bad shepherds from their office.

The Lord will take charge of His own flock, gather it together from where it is scattered, and feed and tend it on good pasture in the land of Israel. He will sift the flock by getting rid of the "fat" and "violent" ones.

He will appoint His servant David shepherd over His flock, make a covenant of peace with His people, and bless the land with fruitfulness, so that Israel may dwell there in security, and no more suffer by internal strife and famine or be carried off by their enemies.

This chapter (Eze. 34) is a repetition and expansion of the prophecy of Jeremiah 23:1-8. Both prophecies deal with the salvation of Israel and the fact that the sheep will be gathered and tended by the Lord and His servant David.

Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Rev. 12:6, "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days."

The Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd

Jesus Christ is presented as the "Good Shepherd" in that He lays down His life for His sheep. This refers to Christ's saving work on the cross, the atonement.

In Hebrews 13:20,21, He is called the "great shepherd," a title that refers to divine blessing to advanced believers.

In 1 Peter 5:4, the title "Chief Shepherd" is the title for Christ as we face Him after death.

The Lord Jesus provides for His sheep in many ways.

- The believer, like a sheep, is helpless and has no sense of direction; a sheep must be guided by a shepherd. We need Bible truth as our guide in life.
- A sheep cannot clean itself; this a reminder of our Lord's provision of cleansing, as shown in 1 John 1:9.
- A sheep is helpless when injured. So, when we are injured by the various problems in life, only the Lord can provide the necessary therapy.
- A sheep is defenseless; he depends on the shepherd for protection. The Lord provide the armor of God for protection.
- A sheep can't find food or water for itself. A sheep must depend on the shepherd to lead it to water.
- A sheep is easily frightened or panicked. The shepherd calms the sheep with songs in the night; i.e. Bible truth in the soul.
- When the sheep produces wool, it belong to the owner of the flock. It does not belong to the sheep.

Every Christian is supposed to be "like Christ." Pastors and elders, in particular, must have the qualities of good shepherd that the Lord Jesus embodies.

An elder must have the "mind of Christ." This means that, as he grows into his job as elder, he will become more like Christ in his thinking and shepherding. If he does not, he will be a bad shepherd.

Matthew 9:35-38

Matthew 25:31-34

Luke 15:4-7

John 10:1-18

John 21:15-17

Keep in mind as we study - the sheep belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. All through the scriptures that we are studying, the flocks belong to God.

They do not belong to the human shepherd. By illustration, David was the shepherd for sheep that belonged to his father, Jesse.

In Heb. 13:20, Christ is called “the great Shepherd of the sheep.”

1 Peter 2:21-25, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

Matthew 18:10-24

Psalm 78:51-54, “He smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.”

Psalm 79:13, “So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.”

Isaiah 40:10,11, “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

If an elder has the mind of Christ, he will have the attitude of Christ toward his flock and toward his job as shepherd. This is the attitude

and motivation to look for in anyone who aspires to the office of pastor or elder.

David as the Shepherd of Israel

1 Chronicles 17:3-9

1 Chronicles 21:16,17

In this passage, David takes the responsibility for the poor handling of his human flock when he numbered the people.

Spiritual Qualifications for an Elder (Shepherd)

The most important function in a church - and the most important activity that a Christian can engage in - is the study and teaching of the Word of God. Bible truth is the theoretical and practical support for every other feature of Christian life, including worship, prayer, evangelism, missionary service, discipling, and fellowship. Without a solid foundation in Bible principle and doctrine, a Christian can spend his life flailing around trying to serve the Lord while never understanding the basic plan of God for his life and ministry.

In a local church, someone has to teach, to organize things, to arrange for the activities of the organization, no matter how small. If no hierarchy is imposed on a community of people, leaders will emerge anyway, either chosen by the group to take charge, or, by default, to move into a leadership void.

In the Bible, Christian leaders are not chosen politically, or by seniority, or by submitting a résumé. An “eldership” is a battlefield commission; a person tested and proved in battle is seen to be the natural choice for a position as a bishop or elder.

The most highly decorated American soldier of World War II, Audie Murphy, received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant, after he had proved himself in battle. His leaders had seen in him the qualities of leadership and proven ability that made him eligible for that honor. (He was prevented by his physical disability from wounds from attending the U. S. Military Academy after the war.)

In the Epistle to Titus, the task given to Titus was to observe which individuals were qualified to be appointed, according to the criteria Paul outlined.

Chief among these qualifications was that the elder was to “hold to the faithful word as he had been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine to refute and to convince the gainsayers.” An elder is primarily a teacher of the Word of God. If he does not teach his flock what the Bible says, his sheep will perish of malnourishment!

The qualifications of elders (pastors, bishops, overseers, presbyters, deacons) are given in such passages as 1 Peter 5, Titus 1 and 2, 1 Timothy, and Acts 7.

Think about Titus’s job of selecting elders on Crete.

He had to observe men in the communities on Crete and decide which to appoint as elders. Maybe he interviewed likely candidates. Maybe he asked other believers to describe the qualities they say in various people.

It’s possible to fake many things in the Christian life. A person can smile, talk the language of the church he attends, refrain from certain taboos, and generally fool most of the people most of the time. After all, we don’t go around questioning people to their face about the genuineness of their profession or claims. If a person claims to love the Lord and be devoted to Christian service, how can you tell if the claim is genuine?

Well, there are two things in which it is extremely difficult to fool an experienced person like Titus. First, it is hard to give the appearance of having a great love for the Word of God. And second, it is hard to fool a discerning Christian into believing that one has the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD

When a person genuinely loves the Lord, a love for the Word of God naturally accompanies that love. That person will give evidence every day of immersion in the Bible. After all, the Bible is

the communication of the Lord Jesus, the One loved. A desire to know the Word, to meditate in it, and to talk about it, will be just as natural as a young person’s total captivation with romance.

In fact, this characteristic can be used to discern the true merits of any candidate for Christian office. A person can attend church, engage in worship and Christian service, and use Christian vocabulary. But there may be some ulterior motive in this.

A young man who is interested in a young woman can readily adapt himself to her surroundings and seem to be something that he is not. People are chameleons when trying to impress others. But it is very difficult over a period of time for a person to establish a reputation as one who is absorbed by the Word of God, unless the Bible is the center of attention and devotion.

A Christian who is motivated by a desire for recognition, a lust for power, or an ambition to have a religious career, can adopt almost any appearance or conform to any program or set of standards. One of the most difficult things to fake, however, is an occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The other thing that is hard to cover up is a lack of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But how can you tell when a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?

The people in Acts 7 were expected to do just that when they selected the first seven deacons. They were expected to select men to handle this job, based on just this one qualification. If you had been in that church, how would you have known whom to vote for?

Would you believe that a man is Spirit-filled because he tells you he is, or because he says he has had a spiritual experience? Would you be impressed by a person who is sweet, smiles, and uses spiritual vocabulary? The outward appearance is easy to counterfeit. When one person exhibits some genuine spiritual power or ability, it’s quite natural that others will envy

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 17
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

that and want to fake it, or buy it (Simon the Sorcerer)!

But Titus was looking for some very objective evidence of genuine Christian character in the men he was considering for positions of responsibility on Crete.

LOVE - The first fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5 is Love.

Titus 1:8 states that an elder is to be "a lover of hospitality": (**philozenos**); he is to have a love for strangers. This word carries the connotation of hospitality, of doing something for someone who does not earn or deserve the good treatment, because there has been no previous acquaintance. This word reflects a Grace attitude toward people who have not yet earned one's consideration.

This is a word of impersonal love - the type of attitude that is free of arrogance, envy, hatred, or even disdain for other people, even if there is sharp disagreement about doctrine or practice. This is the type of love that permits a Christian to love even his enemies or people that he doesn't like.

There is no envy, self-righteousness, or sinful judging accompanying this love. There will be no hatred, maligning, or malicious gossip involved in this love.

This is the type of love that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It does not come from emotion, although it may cause emotion. This is the "professional" love of the mature Christian believer, analogous to the Love of God, the quality of which does not depend on the behavior or character of the one being loved, but on the character of the one who loves.

JOY - Joy is the happiness which God provides, a happiness that does not depend on people, circumstances, or things to maintain it. Joy is the relaxed mental attitude that comes from casting one's cares on Christ, knowing that He cares for us. A person who does not possess spiritual joy will chase after the world's attractions and provisions because there is no satisfaction in the things of the Lord.

PEACE - Peace is the result of exercising Faith-Rest. Faith-Rest is the process of trusting God the Father to keep his promises, to make provision for every contingency and trial, and then enjoying the tranquility that abiding in Christ provides. A person without godly peace will fret and stew, try to solve problems in flesh, and will generally exhibit the same anxieties as the unbeliever in the same position.

PATIENCE - the long view; the quality that results from having eternity's value in view, of being occupied with Christ, of living in the Word of God, and of knowing what God's plan is and how it is working out in the life. The impatient person wants things now and will avidly pursue "things", not being willing to wait for the Lord to provide or promote.

THE ELDER'S PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

An elder must be an accomplished instructor of the Word of God. There are many other duties of elders, especially of those who are overseers, such as priests, pastors, bishops; but the underlying basic responsibility is that of teaching - feeding the flock.

To the spiritual character and personal integrity described above must be added the training and growth in "knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" that allows the elder, as the chief among edified believers, to serve as an effective shepherd.

A local church needs at least one person who teaches the Bible with sufficient quality, and in sufficient quantity, to provide nourishing spiritual food for the congregation. The teacher needs to have a thorough knowledge of the Word and the ability to correlate the facts and doctrines of scripture and make application of those principles to Christian living.

A Christian needs to know what the Bible says and what it means. A Christian is supposed to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." There is no substitute in any believers' life for a thorough overall knowledge of the facts, the doctrines, and the spiritual

The Acts of the Apostles	Page 18
ACTS 317, Acts 20:25-38	a Grace Notes study

principles of the Word. A pastor must be willing and able to spend the hours studying and teaching that are required.

If there is no shepherd to teach these things, the people will be hungry.
