

The Elders' Ministry and Authority

I. Review:

A. In Old Testament

1. Elders were older men
2. They acted as representatives of the people
3. There were counselors
4. They were teachers
5. They were leaders
6. They arbitrated and were overseers of various municipal disputes & affairs
7. They conferred authority on others

B. Greek words used for elders in the New Testament

1. Presbuteros - elder, aged man
2. Episkopos - overseer, bishop, guardian
Verb forms (episkopeo, episkeptomai) - visit, be concerned for, see to it
3. Poimen - Shepherd, Pastor
Verb form (poinmano) - to shepherd, tend, or feed
4. Oikonomos - steward, manager

C. The Shepherding Metaphor shows elders are to

1. Feed the flock
2. Lead the flock to good food and water
3. Search for and bring back strays
4. Examine each sheep for injury or disease
5. Protect their sheep
6. Know their sheep
7. Be accountable for their sheep

II. I Peter 5:1-4

A. What the elders are to do:

1. Shepherd the flock among you
2. Exercising oversight
 - a. Not under compulsion, but voluntarily
 - b. Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness
 - c. Nor yet as lording over those allotted to your charge, but proving

to be examples to the flock

3. Example of the Good Shepherd, Jesus (Mark 10:35-45)

- a. The Apostles were not to practice Lordship
- b. Jesus came not to be served but to serve
- c. Jesus came to give his life

III. Ephesians 4:7-16

- A. Pastors, or “shepherds” are included as part of the church offices in this passage
- B. The various ministries listed are regarded as gifts of grace
- C. Purposes for elders ministry:

1. Equipping Saints for works of service (NASV)

- a. Alternate translations:
 - 1) “perfecting of the saints”, KJV
 - 2) “to prepare God’s people...” NIV
 - 3) “so that the saints together make a unity in the work...” JB
- b. Meaning of the word “katartismos” (equipping)
 - 1) Translations from BAGD lexicon: “setting of a bone”; “preparation”; “restoration”; “equipping”; “training”
(Used only once in the New Testament)
 - 2) Verb form is “katartizo”
 - a) Means to “put in order”; “put into proper condition”; “to make complete”; “to prepare”; “to restore”
 - b) Verb form used several times, here are a few:
 - Matt 4:21 - *mending* their nets
 - Luke 6:40 - after he has been *fully trained*
 - Rom 9:22- of wrath *prepared* for destruction
 - Gal 6:1 - *restore* such a one in a spirit of
 - I Thess 3:10 - *complete* what is lacking in
 - I Peter 5:10 - in Christ will *perfect*, confirm,
 - 3) The idea the word portrays then, is to put into working order, or to put something into its intended condition.

2. This equipping is for the building up the Body of Christ

3. The building up is to lead to the unity of the faith
4. The building up is also to lead to the full knowledge of the son of God
5. The full knowledge of the Son is to lead to maturity
6. The maturity is to keep the saints grounded in sound doctrine
7. They are to promote the whole body working and contributing to its own growth.
 - a. Part of growth will come from speaking the truth in love (v.15)
 - b. The building up of the body will be in love (v.16b)

D. "Pastors and Teachers"

1. According to the sentence structure, both of these words may be speaking of elders, but from two different aspects.
2. Each of the words (apostles, evangelists, etc.) are preceded by a definite article "tous" and the conjunction "de" except for the word "teachers"
 - a. "Teachers" does not have an article and instead of "de", has the article "kai"
 - b. Difference between "de" and "kai"
 - 1) "De" is a stronger word, often used to show contrasts. An example would be - "I love her *but (de)* she loves him." It is usually translated "but", "rather", or "and"
 - 2) "Kai" is a simple connecting conjunction. An example would be "He is both Lord *and (kai)* Christ." It is usually translated as "and", "also", or "even".
3. The literal sense of the passage, then, could be saying: "...and some as evangelists, and some as pastors also teachers"

IV. Acts 20:28-38

- A. The Elders were instructed to be on guard (which is a mark of a faithful shepherd)

1. For themselves - Lest they get careless
 2. For the flock - To protect them from enemies
- B. They were to shepherd the church
1. Jesus purchased the church with his blood, so the church was not theirs
 2. Savage wolves would come in, not sparing the flock
 3. People from their own number would draw people away from the faith
 4. Paul was warning them that their task was not going to be easy
- C. They were commended (entrusted) to the word of God
1. It was able to build them up - If elder not built up, can't build up others
 2. It was able to give them their inheritance
- D. They were instructed to help the weak

V. Titus 1:9-11

- A. An elder is to be able to exhort in Sound Doctrine
1. Exhort - ("Parakaleo") To urge, encourage, or comfort
 2. Sound (correct, healthy, well grounded)
 3. Doctrine - (teaching)
- B. An elder is to be able to refute in Sound Doctrine those who contradict
- C. An elder is to silence rebellious men

VI. James 5:14-16

- A. A sick person is instructed to call for the Elders
1. The Elders are to pray over the sick person

2. They are to anoint (Grk: "alepho") them with oil in the name of the Lord
3. By implication, confession of sins would be involved in this (v.16)
 - a. However, sickness is not connected to ones sins, see John 9:1ff
 - b. The passage says "IF" they have sinned...
4. This prayer by implication is not to be of the five minute variety (v.17 use of the word "earnestly")

C. Study of "Anointing"

1. Greek uses 2 words for "anoint", "Chrio" and "Alepho"
 - a. "Chrio" has a restricted meaning. It nearly always refers to a ritual or symbolic anointing (Hebrew-"masah")
 - b. Alepho, a more general word, is at times a synonymous word for Chrio. More often it refers to the physical act of anointing without religious overtones. (Hebrew-"suk" and "tuah")
 - c. Both denote the action of smearing or pouring of an anointing oil over a person or object
 - 1) Either an ointment of soft fat (myron) or oil (elaion) was used
 - 2) They used olive oil, or more expensively, myrrh and balsam.
 - 3) At times oil had various perfumes or ingredients mixed with it
2. Purposes of Anointing ("alepho")
 - a. In secular use:
 - 1) "In the ancient east ... The actual healing properties cannot be disentangled from the magical conceptions associating with anointing. Every ailment was associate with the power of gods or demons" *-NIDNTT, Vol 1, p. 119*
 - 2) "Anointing acquired a further significance, ... Here the action indicates obligation and honour, and also protection for the one who is anointed" *-NIDNTT, Vol 1, p. 120*
 - b. For hygiene, care of the body or beauty
 - 1) Ruth 3:3 - Ruth was to wash and anoint herself to meet Boaz
 - 2) 2 Chronicles 28:15 - Refresh captives by anointing

- c. Associated with joy, so it is omitted during mourning or fasting
 - 1) 2 Samuel 14:2 - In pretending to mourn, not anointing self
 - 2) 2 Samuel 12:2 - David, when ceasing to mourn, anointed self
 - 3) Micah 6:15 - People will not anoint self due to judgment
 - 4) Mt 6:17 - Jesus said not anoint face so people not know you are fasting
 - d. To show honor to a guest
 - 1) Psalm 23:5 - anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows...
 - 2) Luke 7:46 - Hospitality dictates anointing guests with oil
 - e. In association with healing the sick
 - 1) According to Josephus, it was administered by physicians when used medicinally (Wars I:656; Antiquities 17:172)
 - 2) Mark 6:13 - Anointing the sick & healing them (miraculous)
 - f. To embalm the dead
 - Mark 16:1 - They brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus
 - g. To signify holiness, or separation (sanctification) to God
 - 1) Genesis 31:13 - Anointed a Pillar
 - 2) Exodus 40:15; Numbers 3:3 - Anointing of Priests
3. Purposes of anointing (Chrio)
- a. To anoint Kings (here are a few)
 - 1) Judges 9:8 - Abimelech, son of the maid of Gideon
 - 2) I Samuel 9:16-17; 10:1 - Saul
 - 3) I Samuel 16:12-13; 2 Samuel 5:1-4 - David
 - 4) I Kings 1:39 - Solomon
 - 5) The anointing signified the official communication of the gift of authority, strength and honor
 - b. To anoint the Priests
 - 1) Exodus 29:7; 30:22-33
 - 2) Leviticus 8:12; 21:12
 - c. Used to signify the anointing of Jesus
 - 1) "Christos" (Christ) is from this word, meaning the anointed one, which translates the Hebrew word "Messiah"
 - 2) Heb 1:9 - Anointed with the oil of gladness
 - 3) Luke 4:18 - Anointed to preach (quotation from the O.T.)

- 4) Acts 4:27 - "Jesus, whom thou didst anoint" (in a prayer)
- 5) Acts 10:38 - anointed with the Holy Spirit & with power

d. Used of Christians

- 1) 2 Corinthians 1:21
- 2) I John 2:20

e. To set apart or sanctify objects

- 1) Exodus 40:9; Numbers 7:1 - The tabernacle and its furnishings
- 2) Leviticus 8:10-13 - The tabernacle, altar, Aaron and his sons

D. Possible meanings of the anointing of James 5:14

1. It was miraculous

- a. Since this was a general letter (not to one specific church), would have to assume that ALL elders had miraculous gifts
- b. There is no indication that this instruction was to involve a miracle
- c. Many miracles were practices without the use of anointing
- d. It is not the oil, but the Lord working through the faithful prayers of the elders that will make the sick person well.
- e. Jesus spoke of "moving mountains" through faith, and that is not necessarily miraculous

2. It was medicinal (as in Luke 10:34, the Good Samaritan)

- a. The word used in Luke 10:34 is not anoint.
- b. Both in Luke 10:34 and Isaiah 1:6, the oil was used specifically for wounds, not just any sickness
- c. There were more types of medicines than just oil.. While oil would be useful in some ailments, it would be useless in others.
- d. There was a perfectly good word for "medicine" in Greek, but the word used here is "anointing with oil"
- e. Elders, not a physician were to be called

3. It was symbolic

- a. The oil was symbolic of commending the sick person to God
- b. It was to be done in the "name of the Lord"
- c. The healing is not because of the oil, but because of faith. The actual healing comes from God.
-A parallel would be baptism. Salvation is not because of the water, but because of Faith. The actual forgiveness comes from God.
- d. This practice was widely used throughout church history. The early Greek church called it the "*euchelaion*", or "prayer oil"

Note: During the 7th century A.D., this practice had evolved into the heretical sacrament of what the Catholic Church calls “extreme unction”)

- E. One thing stands clear from this text in James, part of the Elder’s ministry involves prayer for those in his flock.

VII. Examples of Elders in Action

- A. Acts 11:27-30 - Financial aid sent to the elders
- B. Acts 15:1-35; 16:4 - Apostles and Elders settle a dispute over the law
- C. Acts 21:17-26 - The Elders in Jerusalem advise Paul on how to be accepted

Discussion Questions for the Elders' Ministry and Authority

I Peter 5:1-4

1. In verse 2, what does it mean to tend/shepherd the flock? Explain.
2. Which flock were they to tend? Why do you suppose the text specifies which flock?
3. What is the first contrast that Peter gives as to how an elder is not to shepherd and how he is to shepherd?
4. Is it possible for an elder to serve under compulsion? Explain.
5. Why would it be bad for an elder to serve under compulsion?
6. What does the term "sordid gain" mean?
7. What is the wisdom in elders "not lording it over the flock" and being examples instead?

Ephesians 4:7-16

1. How should the elder view his ministry? What effect would this view have on himself? On the flock?
2. Explain the idea behind "equipping the saints".
3. Explain the goal(s) of equipping the saints.
4. How is the body to grow?
5. What does the way the body is to grow say about the elders work?
6. What does the term "pastors and teachers" imply about the ministry of shepherding?

Acts 20:28-38; Titus 1:9-11

1. According to these passages, how would you say an elder is to stay alert?
2. Why should an elder stay alert?
3. Is the elder supposed to comfort the sheep or be tough with them? Explain.
4. Where do the enemies of the flock come from?

5. How would a shepherd protect and rescue his flock?

James 5:14-16

1. Discuss what part of the ministry of elders involves according to this passage?
2. Why do you suppose it was the elders the sick were to call and not someone else?
3. Explain the significance to the anointing with oil.

Acts 11:27-30

1. Why would the financial aid have been sent to the elders?
2. What does this say about elders?

Acts 15:1-35; 16:4

1. Was the decision made by the Apostles and the Elders a doctrinal matter (right and wrong), or did they decide to make a concession to help settle tension in the church? Explain.
2. How did the church at large view the decision they had made?

Acts 21:17-26

1. Why did the elders give Paul the advice they did?
2. How did Paul view their advice?
3. Is there an implication for us on how to view the decisions and advice of the elders?