

# Bible Basics Conference 2015: The church

## Part 7

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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] We've already seen that pastors are gifts, people, given to the church.

That we can think of pastors as shepherds, and it's shepherds that care and feed for the flock. As Mr. McIntosh, you said, that the pastor is to the soul what the doctor is to the body. How many times have you been to the doctor this year? I've got another question for you. I want you to think back over your Christian lives. How many times have you received pastoral care?

How many times has somebody come beside you, helped you, cared for you, fed you, comforted you?

[00:01:02] One article that I read, a comment really, spoke about a well-known Christian person saying that as he pastored his flock, the end that he had in view was that they didn't need pastoring anymore.

That it was a short-term project.

But we know that pastoral care can take up a lot of time, a lot of effort, a lot of care, and a lot of concern.

Living as a Christian, as we do today, in this country, in this year, is difficult.

I don't think we need to be persuaded of that fact. There are few Christians around. Demands for those in work are great.

[00:02:07] Fellowship sometimes is not as often, not as frequent as we would like.

Those that have grown old, that are still here, waiting for the Lord to take them home, are left often alone, without comfort, without even fellowship with others. All that they have known have gone, and they're left very much alone. But how thankful we are that we know that the Lord cares. He is our

shepherd. He is the good shepherd, the great shepherd, the chief shepherd. And he has, besides the untold, unfathomable resources that are left in him, in himself, [00:03:01] he has, understanding what we need, given us pastors to take care, to watch over us.

But besides pastors, those people that have been given a gift, then we have these verses, this one in Acts 20, that tells us that pastoral care is exercised by elders, in a local context, in a local assembly.

And as we look at this verse, we can see how it starts off. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves.

Paul here is speaking to the elders at Ephesus. And he begins here, this verse, and he says, take heed, therefore, unto yourselves. Is there little pastoral care, sometimes in evidence amongst us? [00:04:07] Have you needed some pastoral care at times, and found that it wasn't evident, it wasn't available to you? I wonder why that is. Isn't one of the reasons, because the elders here were told in the first place, to take heed, therefore, unto yourselves.

We cannot exercise pastoral care if those doing it are concerned and taken away by things other than the Lord's interests.

They're not close to the Lord, thinking about other things. So the first instruction is to take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, before this work can commence. And to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, [00:05:06] to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. So we notice there that word feeding, overseas, in relation to local elders.

We've already had and been reminded that pastors, people, one of the gifts, that those pastors don't just work in a local context, but they work worldwide, or globally.

That a pastor can move from place to place. Thankfully, he can use the gift that he has been given to help people throughout the world. The elders exhorted to feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, [00:06:06] not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

Not by constraint, not because we have to, but willingly. Because they want to. They want to serve the Lord. They want to be faithful to him. They care for the sheep. They're sympathetic. They're concerned about the difficulties and problems and issues that the saints pass through. Not for filthy lucre. Not for money.

But of a ready mind. Always willing. Always available. Always wanting to help.

Seeing that there is that difference between the gift of pastoring, or pastors, that we have in the scriptures, that it's a gift given by Christ, that involves shepherding the sheep, that the pastor works globally, directed by the head in heaven, [00:07:09] and that there might be several having that gift, that the office of a pastor isn't found in the scripture, didn't exist in the apostolic church, we know that the only offices are elders and deacons, that we never find one man in charge, the boss of a local group of Christians, and that, if it does happen, might hinder gifts in the local church. There is a massive difference between that gift of being a pastor and what is sometimes used for those that are a one-man ministry, and those that take the preeminent role amongst a local group of Christians. So we've seen that there are pastors to help us. [00:08:03] There are elders to help us.

But what about what action do we take?

What role do we get involved with?

The scriptures here indicate to us, aren't we all supposed to care for one another?

Aren't in some way we're all looking after each other?

That we have a concern when one member suffers? The Lord Jesus, when he spoke, said, If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

And we know there that he's not speaking literally of washing someone else's feet, [00:09:01] but he's speaking of using the scriptures, cleansing, washing each other's feet.

Have we ever washed anybody else's feet? Have we brought before our brother or our sister scriptures which would cleanse them, wash them, help them to be available and ready for the Master to use? 1 Corinthians 12, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. What a challenge that is.

We know that there are divisions amongst us, but here it's saying members should have the same care one for another.

That each of us should have that same care.

Do we care for others in our local assembly?

[00:10:05] How much do we care for them?

How much do we know them?

When did we last speak to them?

And in this country, unfortunately, we haven't got much of an excuse. I know that there's at least one person here, and probably more that their local assembly is perhaps 200 strong in another country. We, of course, don't have those such numbers. It's hardly 30 of us as a maximum.

Do we care for one another?

Do we know when they're going through issues and problems? Are we ready to help? Do we put others first?

Galatians tells us, by love, serve one another. Serve one another.

Take that place of serving other people.

[00:11:05] And Galatians, bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

What a challenge I'm sure that is to us all.

But how do pastors use the scriptures?

One of the aspects is of using the Bible to bring the scriptures, a relevant scripture, towards people who need pastoral care.

Pastors will use the scriptures to strengthen believers, make them strong.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The joy of the Lord is my strength.

Do we get our strength from rejoicing in the Lord? [00:12:03] Through scriptures, which we can use to strengthen our fellow believers. A pastor will use scriptures to instruct other believers.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. Do we know the scriptures? Can we instruct our fellow believers, instruct the young in particular, to encourage, but encourage one another, how often?

Daily.

Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Encouraging each other, another challenge.

[00:13:02] And we can use scriptures to correct.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction.

And correcting our fellow believers is exceedingly difficult, I would suspect, for most of us. Correcting.

It's something that we don't take lightly. We should look to ourselves and ensure that we don't fall into the same trap. But correcting believers can save them from a lot of heartache, a lot of misery, going in the wrong direction. There might be times when we're called upon to correct our brother and sister.

So the pastor has to know the scriptures.

[00:14:04] He's got to know when to use scriptures at the right point and in the right situation.

How does a pastor work? He comforts.

A pastor has a sympathetic heart and provides comfort.

I like the picture on the right there. I don't know whether you can read it. A little fellow saying to presumably his brother, You matter!

You hear me!

You matter!

And are loved!

Do we comfort our brethren?

The verse tells us, Blessed be God, the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble [00:15:01] by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. The God comforts us and we're to pass on that comfort to others that need it. A pastor labors, watches and labors over souls.

Are we watching?

Watching over souls, watching over young ones, watching over each other, laboring how time intensive it is, how emotionally demanding it can be.

And Paul says, For which cause we faint not.

Think of the labors that Paul went through for the sake of the young believers. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. [00:16:07] Watching and laboring over a soul brings great benefit for that soul and there's that exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And the pastor applies the truth.

It's no good going to the local hospital with a broken leg and the doctor there starts trying to put your arm into plaster. The scripture that we've mentioned before, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

So the question and challenge for us there is, how well do you know your Bible?

[00:17:03] If people do have issues and problems, can you turn to the scriptures and point them to those words which would help them in their own situation?

The pastor recovers the wanderers. He looks after the Lord's people, preventing wandering and recovering wanderers.

Preventing wandering, knowing those telltale signs which show us that things are not right, that somebody's got a few difficulties, that somebody's got something on their mind, that somebody's taking those first steps, wandering. Are we watching out?

And do we know how to recover the wanderers? A little story I just read this morning, spoke of a well-known brother from the Scottish Highlands, [00:18:04] of the sheep that would fall down off the mountainside, get caught there.

But in fact, because there was luscious pasture there, would be quite happy eating away. Didn't really realize his predicament. And then the question would come, why don't you go down and help him? And the reply would be that the sheep would struggle. It would be difficult. He wouldn't want to leave.

And it wasn't until the pasture had run out, till the sheep had become weak, when he realized it needed help and couldn't struggle, that the shepherd would go down and bring the sheep up safely. And we can remind ourselves of the prodigal son. It wasn't until he came to his senses that he realized that he needed to go back.

Lessons from the past.

The Old Testament talks about David, that shepherd. [00:19:04] And it also speaks of the shepherds of Israel that were so lacking in care for the sheep. David, he chose, Psalm 78 tells us, took him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes, and he brought him to feed Jacob his people.

So David was used to the role.

He knew what it was like looking after sheep and how we can compare ourselves with sheep. Not very bright.

Going the wrong way. Only bothered about feeding ourselves. Not caring for others. David was used to doing that. And so the Lord knew his heart and David fed them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands. But Ezekiel would speak of those shepherds [00:20:03] that fed only themselves.

How it must have grieved and did grieve the Lord's heart when he looked down at those that should have been acting as shepherds. And what did they do?

They fed themselves.

They were only interested in themselves.

How awful that would be if we had that said about us.

That we were only concerned about ourselves.

That we exalted ourselves and we neglected the flock.

Rather telling comment from Spurgeon in fact there, a time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats. Rather telling.

And then further on in Ezekiel, [00:21:03] the flock was scattered and none seek after them. We see that the flock was sick, broken, driven away, lost. They were scattered. They had no shepherd.

But the telling comment is that none did search or seek after them. Nobody was bothered. Nobody cared for the sheep.

And then we come to God's remedy.

Remedy sure is speaking of how God will bring back his earthly people Israel in that future time. But we see some principles here in action. That it was God that will search the sheep. He'll seek them out. He will deliver them out of all places. Gather them from the countries.

Bring them to their own land. [00:22:02] Feed them in a good pasture.

Cause them to lie down.

Bind up those that were broken. And strengthen those that were sick.

When the Lord Jesus came, he came to his own and his own received him not. When he came at that time in the history of Israel, he looked out. He saw the multitudes moved with compassion because they were fainted. They were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. That's how Israel had spiritually disintegrated with shepherds not doing what they should have been doing. And the Lord Jesus was moved with compassion. He cared for them.

Because there was no shepherds. There was nobody caring for them.

[00:23:03] And when we think about the Lord himself, we think of how Peter denied him.

And I often feel if we look at how the Lord acted after he was raised from the dead, that he would go out and search and seek for those two on their way to Emmaus. Bring them back.

He would come and search out Peter and restore him so that he could be a shepherd. He would return again to that upper room where Thomas had said, unless I see.

And the Lord, in his graciousness, came back and appeared to Thomas again. The Lord put himself out in the greatest way possible so that souls could be saved by his death on Calvary's cross. [00:24:01] But he takes actions all the time to look after and care for his sheep.

And when he speaks to Peter here, when Peter is having to face his Lord, he's given that commission to feed my lambs.

The second time he says, shepherd my sheep.

And the third time, feed my sheep.

And so we have here how the Lord would encourage those who are pastors to use their gift worldwide, those who are elders to exercise that gift locally, feeding and taking oversight, and for the saints as all to exercise care one for another [00:25:02] and to be concerned about each other. How can we show pastoral care in simple ways?

Visiting sick in the home and the hospital. We've looked at using the scripture for cleansing. Providing spiritual counsel. Praying with individuals.

Praying for others. How often do we pray for those in our local assembly?

How often do we pray for them?

Restoring believers, often a difficult work, but we can all go wrong.

And some thankfully have been restored and been a great help to fellow believers throughout the rest

of their lives. Sometimes we hear of comments that make us sadden [00:26:01] where we hear of some who have gone off the rails and the comments such as, well they've made their own decision, they've made their own bed, let them lie on it. I don't think our Lord would utter such comments or similar comments. Restoring believers. Encouraging, seeing how important that is. Retrieving wanderers.

We've gone after people, the Lord went after people.

And perhaps we can be encouraged to follow his example. Providing hospitality. Teaching new believers.

Befriending people.

I find it always interesting to note that when people come into a meeting, perhaps a meeting such as this, you might see one or two looking around. Who shall I sit next to? Who's it interesting to sit next to? [00:27:01] Who do I want to speak to? Go and sit next to them.

What about sitting next to the person you don't know? What about looking out when it's coffee break for those that are alone?

All these things bring glory to the Lord Jesus. We've got some updates here. Oh, you can't see it, that's alright.

Alright, let's try and carry on. Practical help.

I think the young ones could be encouraged to engage in practical help. But helping those who need jobs done around the home, etc.

Reading the Bible together. Supporting parents. What a testimony that can be in this world where parents, those who are elderly, are hived off into homes to be looked after by others [00:28:02] while the younger ones continue enjoying their life. Preparing for marriage. Areas where we can exercise practical care and comforting the bereaved. So what does pastoral care involve? If you can remember that slide that we looked after where I called it God's remedy. It was how God spoke of how he will act in relation to Israel.

We see a searching for the Lord's sheep. Seeking out those who have got lost, those who have wandered away. Tending the sheep, looking after them. Providing little items of love and care in our daily lives.

Delivering the sheep from evil. We saw that the Lord would deliver those sheep from Israel.

Gather them.

You can deliver from evil, [00:29:02] but if you're not careful they'll wander off again. But gather them. Who would we gather them to? We would gather them to the Good Shepherd.

The Lord Jesus. Gather them to the Lord. Leading the sheep to the heavenly land. That as we feed the sheep that we can think of heaven itself.



That we can think of the glories of the Lord Jesus. We can think about his person, his work. We can feed each other by referring to the scriptures together. Bringing the sheep into rest.

Which is what the Lord speaks of. So it may be that these few thoughts will help us all.