

Priesthood, gift, office

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Do no better than borrow the title of this little book, Office, Gift and Priesthood.

A very good little book, I thoroughly recommend it by A.J. Pollock. I know that they have three copies at the back and if they sell all those, I'll gladly part with this one. Much helped to me a few years ago in setting out very simply and clearly the scriptural principles behind those three categories and the distinctions between them. Now, I intend to take up these three thoughts, Office, Gift and Priesthood, very simply because we don't have much time and it's a very interesting subject and I feel that I wish to take them up in reverse order because I feel that the truth in relation to Priesthood is vital [00:01:02] and perhaps more important in many ways than our understanding of the other two.

And so, we'll take up Priesthood first and if there's any time, we will touch on Gift and then on Office. The scriptures I read, just a few of many I could have read, the desire was that we would have sufficient from the scriptures to set a little foundation for our thoughts this afternoon.

I'd like us to think back to what we know, I trust we know, of the Old Testament. The system there was that there were a class of persons, priests, those of the household of Aaron, whose function it was to act as intermediaries between the people and God.

[00:02:05] And they had certain functions to carry out, that of offering up sacrifices. Of course, all the children of Israel were able to offer up sacrifices individually but the priests had a special function and we know that in the system of Judaism, the high priest only had access into the Holy of Holies and that on only one day of the year, the Day of Atonement.

The Christian relationship with God is on a completely different basis.

Having said that, of course, I don't mean to set aside that the system of old is but a foreshadow of what we know to be true of our own economy.

[00:03:06] And yet the distinctions that scripture makes clear are such that there's a very vital link and I feel that if we understand rightly the distinction between the old system and the new, in other words, that of Judaism and of Christianity, then in practice many of our difficulties and our weaknesses will disappear. Now I say that conscious of our own weakness and our failing.

But as we look around us at Christendom, if we're honest, and it would take a lot of turning a blind eye to the situation to deny that it's true, that in Christendom we see every manner of organization.

[00:04:03] It would be hard to persuade any that what we see in one stream of Christendom is right, simply because there are so many other ways that Christians do things that we would have to ask ourselves, why are there so many different organizations and approaches to the matter of Christians coming together? So I suggest that it's not a profitable exercise to be occupied with what we see in Christendom, but rather if we look at the scriptures and are occupied with what the word says, then these other things will fall into their place. So I trust that nothing I say will be taken as being a pointed remark to any present. I don't know you all and I have no intention of commenting on an individual or any company of believers.

[00:05:02] The portion I read latterly in Ephesians is one of the very clearest, in my mind anyway, in relation to the privileged place that we have as Christians in our own day.

The apostle takes up, in the very earliest days of the church, he takes up these two classes, if we can call them that, of people, the Jews and those who are not Jews.

The one he describes as being of the commonwealth of Israel and having to do with the covenants of promise, and there are those who are not so, uncircumcised, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise and so on. These were the two classes of person which existed at the time. [00:06:01] And the wonderful truth that Paul was bringing to the Ephesian believers was that that which once separated Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised and so on, has been done away with in Christ and through his work. Now, of course, men can maintain the distinction, but in Christ, in the work that he has accomplished, we read that he has made of two, of twain, one new man, one new thing.

And so it is that Christianity is a new thing.

And I wish that every, I was going to say every young person, I wouldn't limit it to them, every person in this room, I would desire that you have very clearly in your mind the truth of this. Christianity is not an improvement on Judaism.

[00:07:01] It is not, as many see it, a sort of a fulfilment of Judaism.

It is a new thing.

Of two, there is now one.

And we read in verse 14 of chapter 2 of Ephesians that Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.

If we understood clearly that Christianity is a new thing, we would be preserved for many practical lapses and errors.

Carrying on from my earlier comments in relation to other believers and mindful of that, I would say that if we look around us in Christendom, what we do find, in greater or lesser degree, is a carrying over of Judaism.

[00:08:03] A continuing of the practices of Judaism into the Christian church, so-called.

I will leave your own judgement as you study the word for you to come to a conclusion of how insofar, how scriptural that is, these things are.

My desire is that we are occupied with the truth and then these other things will fall into place. One of the wonderful truths of Christianity in distinction to Judaism is that which was before us in the epistle of Peter. That we are a holy priesthood.

Even in our hymn we sang the words, I suppose, of Revelation 1, 5 and 6, that the Lord Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests to God. [00:09:01] A kingdom and priests to God.

Let us get a grip, dear Christian friends, of this wonderful truth. It's a vast privilege for us to realise that each one is a priest.

We're no longer restricted, as the people of old were, to look to a family of priests to intervene.

Neither are we restricted to the single day in the year when there could be access to the holy place of God.

Scripture is full of the most wonderful revelation that we now have access to our God and our Father through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a high priest, one who sits at the right hand of our God and our Father.

Even in that little phrase, sits, we get an indication that the work is done. [00:10:05] And a distinction between our Lord Jesus Christ, his great high priest, and the high priests of old who stood before God. Let us then be cheered and encouraged by this word in Peter, that we are, each one, a priest.

If you read the references to priests in the New Testament, if you read the authorised version, you will often come across the little word, office. Now, I value the authorised version greatly, but I would remark on this word.

It's often used when really there is no textual basis for it to be there.

And I feel that the translators, when they translated the scriptures for us, were rather too occupied with the system that they knew. [00:11:02] And they were familiar with an office of a priest.

And this rather coloured their thinking, I think, and they tended to insert the words office in this way. And really, there's no such thought of a position or an official place of priesthood in the New Testament Church.

We're all priests, we are lively stones, that which comprises the house of God.

And it is our privilege at all times to have access to our God and our Father, the one whom the Lord Jesus Christ has made known to us. Now, it's true, individually, we can, in our homes, kneel before our God in prayer.

And we have access, no condemnation, we can approach the throne of grace with boldness. [00:12:02] We don't need any other intermediary other than our great high priest, the one who intercedes on our behalf. And if we offer our prayer to God, in and through the name of our Lord Jesus, we can be

certain that our Father hears our prayer. The same is true of praise and worship.

Individually, there's nothing to limit our access to God.

A wonderful, distinctive place of the Christian, as opposed to the Jew of old.

Now, in occupying our minds with this wonderful thought that we are a kingdom of priests, I want us to think a little bit of what a priest is.

And I trust the few verses we read will help us on our way. The priest, the word I understand, has its root in one who offers sacrifices. [00:13:08] And we read in Hebrews that we are to offer sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices, of praise to our God. Well, it is the privilege of every believer so to do.

And as we contemplate the wonderful work of our Lord Jesus, what other consequence could there be other than a heart full of praise towards God? How could we do otherwise than to lift our hearts in worship to Him and to take up this privilege of priests? Well, our individual link with the Lord is one thing. When we come together as a company of believers, then there's additional responsibilities and privileges which come before us, and other matters of Scripture are applied. [00:14:04] And the last time I was here, I took up in a simple way the distinction of men and women in God's order. And these things would have their place in the Christian company. Having said that, of course, it's not true to say that the sisters are not priests. They are as much priests as the brothers. And if we got a grip of this truth, it would, I believe, be a wonderful help to us. Worship, in a very simple way, I would say, is a heartfelt thing.

Worship is an attitude of heart.

And praise, I suppose, is the audible expression of worship.

Now, there might be other definitions. We can praise, I think, without worship. After all, we praise children when they do something well, and we wouldn't say that that's worship. [00:15:03] But you understand my thought. The praise is the audible outpouring of what is in our hearts.

When we come together on a Lord's Day morning to remember the Lord Jesus in the way that he's requested, in the breaking of bread, there is, quite rightly, a consciousness of him in the midst.

After all, we gather together unto him. We go to our meeting place with the expectation, the anticipation that he is there. And we go with consequently subdued hearts prepared for the occasion which is before us. And in a simple way, we respond to his loving request, this do in remembrance of me. We're conscious, too, of the word in Hebrews that, in the midst of the assembly, will I sing thy praises. And so the Lord Jesus is the chief singer, the one who leads our praises to our God and our Father. [00:16:07] When we're in that attitude, then, of worship, we need priests.

The sisters are still priests, and they have on their hearts the thoughts of him.

And in response, their hearts well up in worship. The brothers, too.

And as a company, not merely as individuals now, such as we would be if we were alone in our room at home, but as an assembled company, those thoughts are combined.

And there's a silent appreciation to God of all that he has done through his beloved son. The Spirit of God, the power for all that takes place in such a meeting, knows the hearts of each one, knows the thoughts of each one.

[00:17:03] The Holy Spirit is able to give expression to that united attitude of wonder and worship, and he takes those heartfelt thoughts and feelings and he gives an exercise to a brother to express it audibly.

It can be any brother who's desiring to be used by the Holy Spirit, one who is not at enmity with God through some sin or some other matter.

Where there is liberty of the Spirit, he will use any whom he will. And so there's a response a brother gives out to him or stands and offers a prayer. It's not an individual prayer of thanks and worship. It ought not to be.

But it is rather the expression of what the Spirit has given him, [00:18:02] and it ought to be the thoughts of the entire company. In this way we see in our own day that God, the Lord Jesus, is worshipped. We see this in John 4.

The Father seeketh such those true worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth.

I trust you can see from these meditations that the sister has as vital a part to play in the assembly's worship as the brother. How often we come together and we feel some inertia.

There seems to be an inability for us to respond to God in praise and worship.

Is it the root of it all?

Is it perhaps that there are individuals who do not, who are not exercised, [00:19:02] who have not had that individual response to God?

If it's the case, then there will be a drag on the meeting.

Now, all these things I'm sure we can identify with in one way or another. It would be a happy thing if we can't, but in my limited experience often there's a dullness to our response to God, and it must have its source in the priestly attitude of heart which we each have.

I say this not as a criticism but as an exercise and as exhortation to us all.

No doubt the sisters feel often restricted, but they ought not because I've lost count of the times that I've given out a hymn and afterwards his sister has said to me, you know, I was thinking of that just before you gave it out. [00:20:04] This then is the way the spirit would have the church work in a practical way. The sisters' part is a vital one, and we brothers who have the responsibility to take an audible part, we need something to work on, as it were, and we need to be able to give expression to the worship of the whole company. Otherwise it's merely an individual matter and we might as well, I'm not proposing this, but we might as well stay at home and give our own individual prayer to God, and if we did that we'd be the losers, but more importantly God would be the loser. He desires the assembled company to praise and worship him, and what a privilege it is for us to be able to do this

as often as we do, each Lord's Day morning. [00:21:03] Well, these thoughts are really intended to occupy us with the great privilege that is ours, as being priests individually and as we come together. There's no thought of this being a right only of a few.

There's no thought that only some are priests and not others. There's no thought in scripture, in the New Testament, that the priesthood is restricted to one, or a few more in any one Christian company.

And yet often, as one converses with believers, that you hear such a phrase mentioned. Dear Christian lady I know refers to our priest.

She often uses other terms, our vicar, our minister, but it surprised me how often she used that phrase, our priest. [00:22:03] Well, I was able to talk with her and to explain that she too, she's a believer in the Lord Jesus, is as much a priest as he is.

Although of course, consequent upon the difference between brothers and sisters, but nevertheless. So we see in Christendom often a lack of understanding of this wonderful and vital privilege that is true of every true believer.

I suppose there's time now to move on to our other two topics, and as there's often an overlap, you'll permit me no doubt to comment on priesthood, if the thought crosses my mind and I feel it's important not to pass it over. I have some other scriptures to read, particularly in relation to gift. The last verses that we read in relation to Ephesians, verse 20, I'll just repeat it.

[00:23:10] We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Well, now in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, verse 8.

Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God [00:24:02] unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head of Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that he henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart. Be sufficient, I think. [00:25:06] There are two other passages that give lists of gifts. One is in Romans 12 and the other 1 Corinthians 12.

And each has a different aspect to bring out.

Here, as we note, the giver of the gift is Christ himself and it's as head of the assembly, the ascended head in heaven.

And here the gifts are really thought of as the person. He gave apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. Here, it's the person in view.

In Romans, the little list of gifts is from God.

And in 1 Corinthians 12, they are the gifts of the Spirit.

[00:26:05] And so we see the whole of the Godhead, if you like, is involved in this matter of gift. The apostles and prophets, we're told, are a foundation.

And very briefly, it's a subject in itself, we note that once a foundation is laid, there is no more need of the foundation. The building is to be built. And the apostles and prophets as persons are now gone and we no longer have apostles and prophets. What sorrow and departure has come in by those who have gone away from this thought and have given weight to so-called teachers and have put them in the place of apostles and prophets. Prophets in the New Testament days being those who gave us what we now have as the New Testament Scripture, [00:27:10] the mind of God.

Well, once the canon of Scripture was complete and it is complete, there's no need for such revelation.

And we had at the time miraculous sign gifts to give credence to the apostles and prophets and they had their own purpose too. And being foundational, we no longer see these in evidence. And yet, how often we're taken up disproportionately with these sign gifts of tongues and healings and all these other things which when looked into turn out to be no such true gift at all. Well, as I said, a subject in itself may be another occasion, another opportunity we could treat such a subject in more detail. [00:28:02] The whole point of gift is that it's given from God.

Whether viewed as God himself, Christ, the Ascended Head or the Holy Spirit, it's not from man.

A person possessing a gift of, let's take an example, evangelism or pastor or teacher, if one has such a gift, the Scripture is very clear that it's for the whole body of Christ, for the whole assembly, the whole house of God. We might make an exception, I suppose, in terms of the sphere of activity for the evangelist, necessarily he uses his gift outside of the house of God that he might bring others in.

But the whole point of gift is that it's for edifying, for building up. The foundations have been laid and the building needs now to take structure. [00:29:05] It needs maintenance as well. And every gift is given for this purpose.

It's for men, primarily.

We see here already a distinction between priesthood and gift. Priesthood is for God, gift is for man.

There might be exceptions in some areas, but generally I think that statement holds true. And if it is true, which I believe it is, it will help us to maintain a distinction between offices.

We don't have an office of a priest, neither do we in Scripture have an office of a gift. You do not hold the position of having a gift. You either have the gift and you use it or you don't. In Christendom, sadly, again there's confusion. [00:30:02] There are offices which are filled.

There's a vacancy and there are applications and the vacancy is filled and the person has that office and he is described as sometimes a pastor. I don't often hear the other terms used, but again it's very clearly a misuse of the term. And I don't say that in criticism of anyone, but it's a fact that we can observe.

A pastor is very simply a shepherd, one who looks after the sheep, tends the flock of God.

Linked here with a teacher, pastor and teachers.

I believe they're separate gifts, but normally they are seen together. And necessarily a pastor needs to be occupied and acquainted with the Word of God.

[00:31:06] Act to teach.

And in a minute we'll look at the overseer who is at to teach as well. We'll see there's often an overlap in these thoughts. So then we have God giving individuals gifts for the purpose of building up the whole Church of God.

Not merely to be restricted to the local company.

Again we find a misuse of this thought.

We hear of the pastor of a local church, where in fact scripture knows of no such thing, but a pastor is a pastor for the whole Church of God. That they might be built up and edified.

If we move on now to our scriptures which cover the section of office, [00:32:05] then I think some comments will be made that will cover both gift and office, and I trust we'll be able to conclude our little time together satisfactorily. 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter 5. 2 The elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. [00:33:08] And then Titus.

Titus 1.

Titus 1.

Titus 1 verse 5.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly, for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed, nor soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. [00:34:06] Then back to the first epistle of Timothy, chapter 3. This is a true saying, verse 1.

If a man desire the office of a bishop, and again you'll note that word office isn't really there, it's better translated, if anyone aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy or filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. [00:35:04] Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy or filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderous, sober, faithful in all things, let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus thus far. Again, I would remark that the use of the word office in verse 10 needs to be read with care.

[00:36:06] Mr. Darby translated it thus, and let these first be proved, then let them minister, being without charge against them. And lastly, in verse 13, those who shall have ministered well, obtain for themselves a good degree. So we see there that there's less the thought of office in the sense of an official position. Rather, it's the thought of what you do.

It's a function. It's something which is done rather than a position which is filled. Now, if we understood this rightly, again, it would guard many a departure from the word of God in Christendom. We read, and we haven't had time to read all the verses, but we read of the apostles ordaining, appointing, choosing elders and deacons.

[00:37:01] The only exception to that is where they have delegated their authority and they've delegated the role to Timothy and to Titus.

But it's very clear from the context that it is a one-off or a temporary delegation of authority. There was to be no thought that Timothy would then go off and delegate to someone else the right to appoint elders. And I would say very clearly that we don't see any authority in a succession being passed down. We have no right to appoint or ordain elders.

Who will do it?

We have no apostles to appoint elders.

Certainly there's no thought in scripture of a company of Christians appointing those to rule over them, as we see in Christendom today.

[00:38:06] I use the term office. I don't feel we should avoid it completely. Office, gift and priesthood.

But I would ask that you treat it and use it with care, because there's no intention really to use it as a place of position.

In particular, I would draw your attention to the verse we read in Peter, where we have this said of the elders.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. Verse three, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being in samples of the flock. That word heritage is in Greek kleros, from which is derived clergy.

You can see from the context that the kleros are not the elders, but the flock of God.

[00:39:06] And yet men have turned this completely about. And nowadays when we talk about the clergy, we have not in view the whole flock of God, but rather a class of persons whose role, it appears, is to be over them, to be apart from them. And often the clergy is used as a synonym for priests, or for those who have gift. And I trust we've seen already that such a use of scripture, of language, is not the thought of God. All believers are priests, all believers have a gift as well, but each has a different gift. And those who do the work of an elder and a deacon have not so much a position to fill, but a work to do.

And they have qualifications that are necessary. [00:40:03] The word overseer is the same word as bishop. It means simply that, to oversee. And yet when we hear of bishops today, again the original thought has been lost.

Because the portions that we've read together, it's clear that the overseer is such over a local company. He has a job to do in his local company.

Not only that, there are more than one. We read of elders in every city. And the thought often today is that there is a bishop over a whole region. Again in contradiction to the word of God.

Scripture often uses the term elder, which is derived from the word presbyteros.

Again a word you may be familiar with in Christendom. [00:41:02] And it means simply an elder.

There were those who were elders. They had maturity, experience, and naturally they have the moral authority, the experience of life, with which to do their work. A novice, we're told, an elder cannot be one who is a novice.

Apart from the practical limitations, he has no experience, there's the risk that he will be puffed up. And he won't be of help to himself or to others. And it would appear from Scripture that an overseer had to be one who was an elder. But not necessarily were all elders overseers.

Just because you're older and have a lot of experience, didn't necessarily mean that you had the qualifications to be an overseer. And we've read of them in Titus and Timothy. Now, I would suggest, and if you disagree with me I would point you to Mr. Pollock and his very helpful book. [00:42:06] He comes over very clearly in this. But the official aspect, that in relation to what is ordained and appointed by the apostle, we do not have today. Because in a sense that was tied in with the foundational aspect of the church. The apostles and prophets and the appointing of elders was something peculiar and necessary for the church in the very beginning. Today we have no apostles or their delegates to appoint elders and deacons. And also there's another difficulty. The Scripture is full of examples when a letter was written to the elders of the church at such and such a place. Now, I

often think if a letter found its way to the post office addressed to the elders of the church which is at Tunbridge Wells, [00:43:03] I'm sure the post office would do their best and somebody would receive it. But I'm sure it wouldn't be received by those for whom it was intended. Who could say who are the elders of the church at Tunbridge Wells? I can say for certain, with all probability, they're not found together on a Lord's Day. You see, the ruin of the church outwardly has meant that there's an inability to carry out the function in the way in which it was intended. Nevertheless, of course, there is much work to be done for the overseer in the local company in which he finds himself. And the moral qualifications are as necessary today as they ever were. And we do well to look to those who, in our own eyes, and that's true by means of the Scriptures, that they are to be approved, to be demonstrably approved. [00:44:02] And we would recognize those who have the qualifications of elders and therefore those who are overseers. But they are not to lord it over us. We are their clergy, their heritage of God given to them. We are their flock that they have to feed and to look after.

It was clear that the elder often has the gift of teaching.

And in fact, Scriptures tell us to give double honor to the elders who are apt to teach. And it would be unusual, I think, to find an elder who didn't have certainly a good grasp of Scripture because they are to protect us from the snares of the enemy, to fend off wrong doctrine, to warn us against those things which would detract from the things of Christ. And so we see that although the official aspect is past, the moral aspect and the need for such work is ever vital.

[00:45:14] And how much we're the losers where, for practical reasons, we have no elders amongst us, no oversight.

What things have come in that might have been avoided if there were those who took up this work well. Well, such is the consequence of the breakdown of the church outwardly. Those who ought to be together are not. And, of course, when we depart from the Word of God, from the principles of God, we can expect only loss. But thankfully, all is not lost and we have always the resource of the things of God. [00:46:03] And so even in weakness and our fewness of number, we can do much that will preserve us from harm and from difficulty. I would like to close by going full circle and reminding us of what is true of every one of us. As a true believer in Christ, we are a priest and we can fulfill that function of a priest, all of us.

Some can't do it audibly, but in the quietness of their own hearts, they can be used of the Holy Spirit to give a word to a brother. And as soon as he's given the word, well, the whole company gets the benefit of it. But more importantly, so does God himself.

Then we need to be encouraged with the fact that every one of us has a gift. It may not be an outward gift. It may not be one of taking a lead. But if you read Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and the passage we've read in Ephesians, you will see there all manner of gift. [00:47:07] All given for the building up of the assembly, whether behind the scenes or in front, and every part vital. Lastly, there are those who are able to take up the work of elders, of overseers.

Deacons too, didn't really say much of that. Elders take up the spiritual matters and deacons, I think, are more occupied with temporal, practical things. We often say the office of an elder is local in its function, and I would agree with that. Although, if a brother had the qualifications, he was an elder and he had the moral qualifications of an overseer, and he were to move from one part of the country to another, you couldn't really say that he wasn't an elder, an overseer, in his new place. Well, I'm

sure there'd be a little bit of transition necessary, but nothing is lost, and he would be able to take up his work there, as well as he did where he once was. [00:48:10] I trust these very simple comments and briefs are a help to us, and I would encourage you, if you're not familiar with these thoughts, to avail yourself of Mr. Pollock's very helpful book, Only £2.95. Many others similarly helpful, and I must say, from my personal experiences, that I derive much help from it. It's opened up the scriptures in many other ways. If we get the principles of God right, often the difficulties which come out in practice are very easy to resolve, if we're familiar with the thought and the mind of God.

I'm going to close with a hymn, 238. 238, and I chose this hymn because it reminds us of the chief shepherd.

[00:49:09] We have pastors, shepherds, but we have a chief shepherd, the one who looks after us, leads us on, leads us out. He knows us by name, and he calls us, and we know and we love his voice. We're able to sing here that with all his fullness can afford, we are supplied. He richly feeds our souls.