

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE “UNITY OF THE FAITH”

I. THE HIGH CALLING OF LEADERSHIP

A. Jesus death demonstrates the high value He places on His flock

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (NIV Jn 10:11)

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (NIV Ac 20:28)

B. Leaders play a vital role in the church’s growth in maturity

¹¹ It was he who gave (TEV- “appointed”) some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith (ESV-“attain to the unity of the faith”) and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV Eph 4:11-16)

II. TRUE SHEPHERDS

A. Love and Genuine Concern for the Flock

²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.

³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (NIV Ac 20:29-31)

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (NIV Php 2:19-21)

² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?’ ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and

brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. (NIV Ezk 34:1-6)

B. Love Expressed In Prayer

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers (NIV Eph 1:15-16). (Paul's prayers center mostly on the maturity of the Body of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit)

C. Pure Motives

² We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. ³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else (NIV 1 Th 2:2-6)

D. Cross-Centered Teaching and Example

¹⁷ Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (NIV Php 3:17-18)

⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! ⁹ For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹ To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹² We work hard with our own hands (ie, giving up their right to support; cf 1 Co 9, 1 Th 2:9). When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. ¹⁴ I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. ¹⁵ Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. (NIV 1 Co 4:8-16)

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to

serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (NIV1 Pt 5:2-4)

...but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (NIV1 Ti 4:12)

E. The Power of a True Example

You know how we lived among you for your sake. ⁶ You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. ⁷ And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (NIV 1 Th 1:5b-6)

- ⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵ Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. (NIVRe 2:4-5).

F. The Power of a False Example

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel...(NIVGa 3:11-14)

G. The High Calling of Shepherds, Especially at the End of the Age

⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. (NIVLk 12:42-46)

III. THE VITAL ROLE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Matthew 18

1. Mt 18:5-9: Jesus has great love and zeal for his sheep. Sin destroys the flock, and ultimately has the potential to exclude people from His kingdom (cf Eph 5:5). Therefore, he issues a stern warning to those who would cause people to stumble in it, and calls believers to deal with it in a serious and intentional way. Not something to be treated lightly.

⁶“On the other hand, if someone causes one of these humble folk (for the meaning of τῶν

μικρῶν τούτων [*ton mikrōn toutōn*] in this context, see *BDAG*, 651, sv μικρός 2.a.; *UBSHS [Mt]*, 316, 561-62; children are a representative example) *who are putting their faith in me to stumble in sin, it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.*" (*Author Mt 18:6*)

2. Mt 18:10-14: The good shepherd loves his entire flock, and doesn't want any of them to be lost. The angels closest to God's throne, who see his face, are also deeply concerned about the flock.

¹⁰"Make sure that you don't write off any of these humble folk who are my disciples. For I tell you this: The angels in the heavens who watch over them see the face of my Father in the heavens continually. ¹²What do you think? If someone has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, he will leave the ninety-nine on the hillsides and go to look for the stray, won't he?" (*Author Mt 18:10-12*).

The Book of Enoch (highly regarded in the early church, though not regarded as part of the canon) may provide some historical insight into the view of angels assumed here:

"And after that I saw thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, I saws multitude beyond number and reckoning, who stood before the Lord of Spirits. ² And on the four sides of the Lord of Spirits I saw four presences, different from those that sleep not, and I learnt their names: for the angel that went with me made known to me their names, and showed me all the hidden things.³ And I heard the voices of those four presences as they uttered praises before the Lord of glory. ⁴ The first voice blesses the Lord of Spirits for ever and ever. ⁵ And the second voice I heard blessing the Elect One and the elect ones who hang upon the Lord of Spirits. ⁶ And the third voice I heard pray and intercede for those who dwell on the earth and supplicate in the name of the Lord of Spirits. ⁷ And I heard the fourth voice fending off the Satans and forbidding them to come before the Lord of Spirits to accuse them who dwell on the earth. ⁸ After that I asked the angel of peace who went with me, who showed me everything that is hidden: 'Who are these four presences which I have seen and whose words I have heard and written down?' ⁹ And he said to me: 'This first is Michael, the merciful and long-suffering; and the second, who is set over all the diseases and all the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gabriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanuel.' ¹⁰ And these are the four angels of the Lord of Spirits and the four voices I heard in those days." (1 Enoch 40:1-10, R.H. Charles' translation)

3. Mt 18:15-20: What to do as a body of believers if a sheep goes astray.

Case Study (Part 1): It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? ³ Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. (^{NIV} 1 Co 5:1-5)

4. Mt 18:21-35: Extending mercy and forgiveness when the sheep repents (the sheep comes “home”)

Case Study (Part 2):⁵ If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶ The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. ⁷ Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰ If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹ in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (NIV² Co 2:5-11)