

The Gospel of John XVI Let the Spirit of God Lead You, *Not Men!*

(John 10)
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GRACE of GOD

What should rein and rule in our lives? This is why the whole thrust of what we want to do has got to be recast in the way that Christ would want us to do it. Here's the whole overall situation that we need to follow:

Romans 5:21: "So that even as sin has reigned [rule] unto death..." The Law tells us what sin is, but there has to be the means of removing that utter frustration of overcoming sin from the human mind and heart, and the only way you're going to do that is not go out and zero in on sin and nail it down, because that is going to be futile attempt on your part. But *Christ in you* and the grace of God is the whole ruling or controlling thing that we need.

"...so also might the *grace of God* reign..." (v 21). That's what needs to be.

Romans 6:12: "Therefore, do not let sin rule..." We're talking about the whole ruling thing that has to come from God. It is the grace of God that must rule! I think this is the whole key, the whole thrust of what we need to understand. And I need to, brethren, get it clear in my mind so that if I sat down to write today it would be different than how I wrote three years ago or six years ago. I think there's a reason why God has not provided the time for me to continuously to be writing during this time because there needs to be a change in our understanding of how things are written.

Everything traditionally with the Church of God is keep the commandments, you're sinning, this guy is wrong, that guy is wrong. That's fine, but what do you do when you find all that out? *That grace might reign!* The whole ruling, controlling factor that we're going to be living by, that we're going to be seeking God by, that we're going to understand about the life of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ and—believe it or not—we're going to learn more about John 3:16 when we go there.

Romans 5:21: "...might the *grace of God* reign through righteousness..."—of Jesus Christ; that gift that God imparts to us, the very righteousness of Christ. People have the wrong idea of that. The Protestants have the idea of that because there's the grace of God, the righteousness of Christ, you don't need to keep the commandments of God. So then, the Church of God retaliates by saying, yes, you need to

keep the commandments of God, and then they downplay grace because they don't want the congregation to become like Protestants.

It needs to be put together in the proper perspective; that we have the righteousness of Christ. That is so fantastic, brethren, that God gives that to us *that grace might reign*—rule, control. That's what makes Christianity simple and joyful, because you don't have to run around wondering if God is going to zap you if you blink your eyes wrong. He's not going to! If you're in the grace of God, *He will never, ever leave you or forsake you!* That's fantastic!

So, if there's one thing we need to grow in—which I feel we're on the verge of it—is having grace reign in our lives, and to give hope and encouragement to people. After all, why do you come out of the world? *Because there isn't any hope!* There's no hope in the world and then you come into the Church of God trying to get out of that—where there's no hope—and you find in the Church of God that you're all Scriptured down into something where you're told there's no hope for you. Where are you going to go?

Keep praying that we grow in understanding with this, because I'm learning and growing. I'm happy about that, and I can say that things that God has put me through is going to be completely worth it, far more worth it. That's only a moment in trauma of something that comes along.

This is the key thing: "...so also might the *grace of God* reign through righteousness unto eternal life... [That's fantastic, because the goal is *eternal life!*] ...through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v 21). That's the whole key and the substance of the Gospel!

Acts 20:24: "But I myself do not take any *of these* things into account, nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify... [witness] ...the Gospel of the grace of God." {note sermon: *What is a Witness?*} There is also the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, no doubt about that! But if you emphasize only the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and not the grace of God, as well, then you again end up with a distorted situation just like you do with grace vs commandment-keeping and everything gets out of shape.

Verse 25: "And now behold, I know that

you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God..." So, the two go hand-in-hand, absolutely!

Unless we understand about the grace of God, I'm convinced we have a long way to go in learning it, how on earth are we going to be able to help people that come out of the holocaust at the end of the age? *We're just not going to be able to understand to help them!*

JOHN 10

In a sense this fits in with what I just covered in the preface; not exactly, but in a sense it does.

John 10:1: "Truly, truly... [Greek: amen, amen—a double emphasis] ...I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber." We're talking about 'religion,' Jesus Christ, and those who do it as thieves and robbers.

Remember the Scripture that says, 'What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?' You can sell your soul to the devil! You can lose any chance of eternal life! And it is by *choice!*

Verse 2: "But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep." We're going to find out later on that Christ is the door. Think of this as a *doorway* rather than a swinging door that opens and closes. That's what it means more than anything else.

Can you think of something concerning the Passover concerning a doorway? *They were to put the blood on the doorpost and lintel, symbolic of entering into protection!* When we read these things it just makes all these Scriptures come to life. "...the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep." We'll have a little bit to say about how a church needs to be run.

Verse 3: "To him the **doorkeeper** opens..." This has to be the angel or angels of God who are carrying out the work of God behind the scenes.

"...and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name..." (v 3). We haven't yet been giving our new name, but God knows what it is.

"...and leads them out. When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (vs 3-4). I'm sure you have no trouble discerning the Truth when you listen to Sunday preachers on television. You can discern that that is not the voice. If there's any inspiration it comes from God. Christ said that if

you're hauled up before councils '*the Holy Spirit will inspire you to say the words of the Father*' in the minute. That's how you know His voice! Are they speaking the words of God?

Verse 5: "But they will never follow a stranger for they **will flee** from him..." We've had that experience, too; we fled from the voice of strangers.

"...because they do not know the voice of strangers." (v 5). Isn't it interesting that when these came up, what did we say, 'Where is that in the Bible? Why is So and So not here in our presence? I don't like what you're saying.' Why? *Because it's not the voice of Christ!*

Verse 6: "Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.'" (vs 6-7).

Immediately we think of John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life...'"

Now let's go back and look at a couple of things that are very important concerning these two sections. First of all, Jesus said that **He was the door!** That door is symbolic also of the Way, and here's a basic, fundamental Scripture.

- *there is only one door*, because there's only one Christ
- *there is only one way*

Matthew 7:13: "Enter in through the narrow gate... [Jesus is that gate; Jesus is that door] ...for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it; for narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (vs 13-14).

The blessing of it is that though it is narrow, straight and difficult, once we're under the grace of God then the way to do it becomes easier because of Christ. Here's a prophecy of this concerning Christ:

Isaiah 40:11: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd..." How does a true shepherd take care of the sheep? *He's with them day and night!* I guess you could say that the sheep dogs are kind of like the angels; they take care of us.

"...He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry *them* in His bosom, *and* shall gently lead those with young" (v 11). This brings a whole flock of Scriptures to mind: *Take My yolk for it is easy and light!*

It is Christ Who is going to do it. That's why it's so important, brethren, that we really emphasize that Christ *in you* is the hope of glory. That Christ *in you* is going to do it for you.

1-Peter 2:21—we are to follow in His steps: "...that you should follow in His footsteps." He leads us! Christ leads us! It says that He goes out before the sheep and the sheep follow Him wherever He goes. Christ is the One Who leads us, and that has to be in faith. This is why Christ will not intervene and drive you. You must be led; you must willingly follow.

There was a movie years ago where this woman inherited a ranch with a whole bunch of sheep, she happened to be in the middle of cattle country. These cattlemen thought that they could go in and *drive* off the sheep. They came charging in with their horses and the sheep just scattered and re-gathered. This guy who worked for the woman sat up on the porch and they had a dog and he'd sit there and say, 'Dawg, go get 'em.' That one little dog would just go out and herd all the sheep and they would go.

That's a good example of a thief and robber trying to come in and scatter the flock. They can't do it. If we follow Christ and are led by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God will lead when we are under the grace of God. That's why there are people that say, 'I wonder if I have the Spirit of God or not.' It's because they're out there trying to do it themselves.

Romans 8:14: "**For as many as are led by...**" not driven; not beaten. You have to choose to follow; if someone is going to lead, you have to choose to follow. *If you're going to be led of the Holy Spirit you must follow Christ!* You must walk in His footsteps on a continuous basis.

"...as many as are **led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.** Now, you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received *the* Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, 'Abba, Father'" (vs 14-15). That's how we are to do it.

Remember, Christ said that if He did not go to the Father the Holy Spirit would not come, and that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in His (Christ's) name. Let's see something that the Holy Spirit is to do:

2-Corinthians 3:17: "Now, the Lord is the Spirit..."—the Spirit that *leads* us; the very power of God. That Spirit is coming from God the Father and Jesus Christ is the One Who causes that Spirit to lead us.

"...and where the Spirit of *the* Lord is, there

is freedom" (v 17)—from what? *Bondage! Sin! Through the grace of God!*

- Have you found yourself sinning less because you daily put yourself under the grace of God?
- Have you found less lust in your mind because you put yourself daily under the grace of God?
- *Yes!*

That is the liberty/freedom that Paul is talking about: that sin will not rule over you, and it's in the mind!

Verse 18: "But we all, with uncovered faces beholding the glory of *the* Lord as in a mirror, are being transformed *into* the same image from glory to glory, even as by *the* Spirit of *the* Lord."

This should be very encouraging. When we follow Christ, now it will become more imperative when we see this. I think this *a good lesson* for me, for you and all of God's people who are willing to listen that they must continually focusing in on Christ. Then we can see an absolutely horrible thing it is for the people of God when they are led to just follow a man, when it ends up with all the rules of men. It gets complicated and it leaves a door for the devil to get in. We can all say, 'Yeah, verily, yeah!'

- He leads them
- we're led by the Holy Spirit
- He goes before them
- we know His voice
- He told this parable

John 10:8: "All whoever came before Me..." That's quite and inclusive statement: Buddha, all the others who were supposed saviors. I think we're going to be shocked at the resurrection and we really know the true history of the earth, we're going to find out there are so many false saviors and religions and people going around.

He said that "All whoever came before Me are thieves and robbers..." (v 8). Somehow we never have it mind that there were people before Christ.

"...but the sheep did not hear them. **I am the door**" (vs 8-9). We're going to see that Jesus told the Pharisees who He was and they kept coming up and saying, 'Who are You? Would you please tell us; our soul is dying to know who are You?'

"...If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture" (v 9). We're going to see that one of things we have to do is feed the flock. That's very important. *We have to feed the flock!*

Look at it this way: Here's a sheepfold, and

you've seen them in the spring when they put all the sheep in the sheepfold and then they have all their lambing. If you just kept them right in that one place, what would happen to all the feed? All the grass would be gone, they would dig up all the roots and everything and they would be standing in a pile of dust when it dries and a pile of mud when it was wet. Therefore, they have to go in and out and find pasture.

That means that in learning of God's Word, we have to continually learn and grow into new pasture areas and come in and go out and eat the spiritual food of God. Every year we're nourished again by God; that's why the Passover is in the spring, and that's why the setting of this is in the spring. I hope that makes sense.

Verse 10: "The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly." I want to get rid of a false notion right here: In the Worldwide Church of God that came to mean that the more goods that we had the more abundant that we lived, and therefore, God is with us. *That's a false premise!*

Example: Marcos of the Philippines had to be one of the most miserable men on the face of the earth. He's had money, all the things he wants. It's not in the abundance of goods to have life more abundantly. What is the greatest, most abundant thing in your life that you can have? ***To have Christ in you and know that you're going to have eternal life!*** That's why the Apostle Paul, even though he had this affliction, the grace of God was sufficient for him. He could abound in that!

I want to prove that it is not the physical things that makes life abundant. How many times was the magazine put out which said, 'The Abundant Life'? That was based upon if you kept the commandments God would bless you. A lot of people have said, 'I keep the commandments of God and I've tithed and I haven't been blessed.' *They're looking for the wrong blessings!*

How many times have I heard in the past, 'If the ministers were keeping the commandments of God we would have more miracles.' Now do you see how wrong those statements are? We were looking at the wrong thing; we were looking to the flesh, the physical. If you mind the physical, you don't mind the things of the Spirit.

With that in mind, let's see how much more important it is that we follow Christ. Why do we go through some of the physical things that we go through? Esther Grisinger has suffered a whole lot more than a lot of people that I've ever known. But

she is living an abundant life; not physically, but *spiritually!*

Matthew 6:24: "No one is able to serve two masters..." That is absolutely true in anything that is done. You can't overcome sin by focusing in on sin. ***You must let grace rule and the Spirit of Christ lead you!*** That's your Master.

"...for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to *the* one and despise the other..." (v 24). Isn't that true? *Absolutely true!* If you follow a man and you're loyal to a man, then anyone who says, 'I want to follow Christ,' what do you do? *You hate them because they're disloyal to the man!* You end up despising.

"...You cannot serve God and mammon. Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious about your life..." (vs 24-25). We are to be concerned, we are to have proper planning and all of that sort of thing. But when it comes down to it, unless God provides, you're not going to have it anyway. *Relax and have faith in God. He will never let you down!* Human beings will.

"...do not be anxious about your life *as to* what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor about your body *as to* what you shall wear. Is not life more than food, and the body *more* than clothing?... [yes, it is] ...Observe the birds of heaven: they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor do they gather into granaries; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?" (vs 25-26). It's amazing what they've discovered about birds. *Absolutely amazing!*

There are animals that have the iron load in their system, which then connects with the magnetic forces of the earth. That's how pigeons find their way. That's how certain microbes only move to the north. If they put a magnet on this side they'll go to the one side, and they found that birds have the mineral right in their system that leads them. *Absolutely amazing!*

We don't want to get a big head and say that we're better than that. Christ is saying that if He's made all this grace and He's done all these things, created all these marvelous birds—they don't have to worry about going out and hoeing, digging, dunging and harvesting—that God provides them the food. We're more important than birds.

Verse 27: "But who among you, by taking careful thought, is able to add one cubit to his stature?... [only Christ can] ...And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these" (vs 27-29).

Go back and read the account of Solomon. How would you like to sit on the throne that he had? It was made out of pure ivory, overlaid in gold, and having the two lions—one on each side—and then the 12 stairs. That was really some throne! All the clothes, the setting, the temple, and yet, Christ said that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as they were.

Verse 30: “Now, if God so arrays the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall* He not much rather clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we be clothed?’” For the nations seek after all these things....” (vs 30-32). We’re not to seek after the physical things. Yet, somehow it got twisted around. A lot of things got twisted around. If you had the abundance of physical things, then obviously it’s a blessing from God.

Well, not necessarily so, because remember, Satan offered Christ the whole world and all the glory of everything. Would you say that was a blessing from God? *Don’t kid yourself; not in the least!*

“...And your heavenly Father **knows** that you have need of all these things.” (v 32). What does God delight in more than anything else? *Your complete worship, love and adoration of Him!* That’s what pleases Him more than anything else that you do.

Verse 33: “But *as for* you, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness... [that grace might reign through righteousness] ...and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil of that *day*” (vs 32-34). There’s going to be enough trouble in each day as it comes along.

Here’s a promise that God has given, Psalm 84:9: Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed, for a day in Your courts is better than a thousand *elsewhere*.... [in the courts of the wicked; he was looking to Christ] ...I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness, for the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory...” (vs 9-11). It’s right there in the Old Testament; God will give grace and glory.

“...no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (v 11). Sometimes those ‘good things’ that we go through—the trials—because we need them. We may not necessarily perceive them as good, but later we can look back

and say that it was because of the result that was brought about spiritually. “...no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” That does not necessarily mean that—twisted around now as it was—the abundant life is not just the physical things that you have.

Verse 12: “O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You.” Notice how it comes right back to that same thing of that faith and trust in God.

(go to the next track)

John 10:11: “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” His whole life is wrapped up in the sheep.

- If we follow Christ, is Christ wrapped up in our lives? *Yes, He is!*
- Has He given His life for us? *Yes, He has!*
- Does He continue to give His life for us? *Yes, He does!*

That should give us a whole lot of hope, courage, understanding, joy and makes life being a Christian be more abundant.

Verse 12: “But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them.” In other words, no concern; the people are just merchandise. Another phrase is *dumb sheep*.

Verse 13: “Now, the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine, and am known of those who *are* Mine” (vs 13-14). Christ is intimately involved in our lives.

Ezekiel 34:1 talks about the shepherds and the shepherds of Israel and what has happened. “And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel...’” (vs 1-2). In this sense it has to do with the shepherds; not only the priests, but also the ones who are the leaders of the country. The hireling is anyone who is in it for the money.

You can liken this with the situation with Marcos of the Philippines. Was Marcos in it for the money? *You betcha!* That’s what he got, and when the sheep were out there all bleating and saying, ‘What’s going on; help us?’ What did Marcos do? *He got out the troops and shot them!* Finally the sheep overwhelmed him. I think it was fitting that it was a woman. She’s kind of like a Deborah.

What did Deborah tell Barak? *Oh, would to God that there was a man that could do this, but there aren’t. Barak, go do it!* She had to tell him what to do. There isn’t one man that could stand up

to Marcos.

“...Prophecy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds, ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?... [We’ve seen this!] ...You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you kill the fat ones, *but* you do not feed the flock. You have not made the weak strong, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up the broken. You have not brought again those that were driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty” (vs 2-4). Sounds just like the Philippines and also like a couple of Churches of God we know, too. Same result!

Verse 5: “And they were scattered for lack of a shepherd. And they became food to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.” How many people have just gone around, drifting around wondering what to do. ‘Where shall I go? I’ll never trust another man again. I’ll never join another organization again.’

Verse 6: “My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill. Yea, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth...” This is talking about Israel. You could say the same thing of the United States today. Everyone goes *their own way!*

Verse 7: “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food to every beast of the field because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search *for* My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.” Therefore, O shepherds, hear the Word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I *am* against the shepherds...” (vs 7-10).

There’s a day of reckoning coming! As a minister I’d better keep that well in mind, too. We’re not going to have a rule of cruelty enforced. It’s just not going to be.

- Why is that needed anyway?
- Is it needed if we’re going to follow Christ and live within the grace of God?
- Why should there be cruelty enforced?
- Hasn’t there been cruelty enforced in the situations we’ve know in the past?
- *Yes! And we’ve all suffered through it!*

Needless to say, Christ said that He would feed them!

“...and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock....”

(v 10). That’s why there are so many different groups; He’s not going to have this kind of feed going on.

“...Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouth that they may not be food for them. For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, **I Myself will search for My sheep** and seek them out” (vs 10-11). Note these Scriptures:

- Jeremiah 23
- Ezekiel 13—the prophets that prophesy out of their own heart, and they’re like foxes in the desert and you can’t corner them down.

John 10:14: “I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine, and am known of those who *are* Mine.” That’s one thing we need to know more and more, brethren. We need to *really know* Jesus Christ! Not have an acquaintance with Him, not understand just by the hearing of the ear, but *understand by the seeing of the heart and the leading of God’s Spirit.*

Verse 15: “Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold...” (vs 14-16).

People read that and they say, ‘All the other nations are beasts and only the 12 tribes of Israel are sheep.’ That is not so! Anyone that God calls is a sheep, a lamb. We have a definition of who is a true sheep of God, but a reverse definition of who is not. If you know something that is not, then by definition you know what is.

Verse 26—Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, the Jews. Were they of the tribes of Israel? *Yes, they were!* Verse 26: “But you do not believe...” This tells us what makes a person one of the lambs or sheep of God: *Believing in Christ is what does it!* Not who you are or what you are or what your lineage is.

“...**because you are not of My sheep**, as I said to you” (v 26). There is no national or physical lineage or genealogy you can attach to that. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, and when they were converted they became the sheep of God. Any Israelite that God calls out of whichever the 12 tribes that God calls, they are the sheep. He’s talking to the Jews when He says, “...you do not believe because you are not of My sheep...” Doesn’t that help clarify it.

Verse 16: “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold...” Those who were being called at that particular time. This is also a prophecy of all those who would be called during the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

“...I must bring those also, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be **one flock and one Shepherd**.... [there it is, Christ is the Shepherd] ...“On account of this, the Father loves Me: because I lay down My life, that I may receive it back again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself...” (vs 16-18). We’ll see what Christ did voluntarily to lay His life down, and what He actually had to become to do that, so that we could receive salvation and the Holy Spirit.

“...I have authority to lay it down and authority to receive it back again. This commandment I received from My Father.’ Therefore, there was a division again among the Jews because of these words. And many of them said, ‘He has a demon and is crazy. Why do you listen to Him?’ Others said, ‘These sayings are not *those* of one who is possessed by a demon. Does a demon have the power to open *the eyes of the blind?*’” (vs 18-21). So, there was great dispute that was going on.

1-Pet. 5 has to do with feeding the flock and doing the things that Christ wants us to do. 1-Peter 5:1: “*The elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder...*” I’m sure this has to do with age; it could have to do with ordination. At this time when Peter wrote it he was old.

“...and an *eyewitness* of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed” (v 1). That’s in reference to when he was on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Verse 2: “Feed the flock of God *that is among you...*” You will notice how this ties right in with Ezek. 34 where God gives the condemnation because they didn’t feed the flock properly. They robbed, stole and all that sort of thing. Here’s an admonition:

“...exercising oversight not by compulsion, but **willingly**...” (v 2). The whole situation with the Church is an oversight. Maybe we can begin to understand more about how God wants things done. An oversight, not an overlord!

“...not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an eager attitude*; not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock *of God*” (vs 2-3). That says an awful lot! Not lords over the heritage; we’re going to see that we belong to God! I think that if we keep that in perspective always, as ministers, then we’re not going to put the people into this yoke of bondage that they had been in.

It’s a terrible thing to come out of the world, get out of the yoke of the bondage of the world and

then get into a yoke of bondage in a church, and then play church. That’s a terrible thing!

Verse 4: “And when the Chief Shepherd [Christ] is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, *eternal* crown of glory.” Let’s see how important it is to feed the flock. It’s important to preach the Gospel, that is true, but here’s something else very important. How can you preach the Gospel unless there is some flock behind the Gospel to preach to.

John 21:15: “Therefore, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, *son of Jonas*, do you love Me more than these?’ *And* he said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord. You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’” That means with the Word of God, with the Spirit of God. How do they feed? *You show them the Word of God and let the Spirit of God lead them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ!* That’s how you’re fed, that’s how you can grow unto the full stature and measure of Jesus Christ. That’s the whole purpose in it.

Christ went through “feed My sheep” three times with Peter. “Do you love Me?” That is a measure of how much you love God as a minister. Is he feeding the flock/sheep? If he’s not doing it then he’s not loving God.

Ephesians 4:11: “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Let’s see what the purpose is. We will get a whole perspective on it. There have been many sermons that I have heard where it ended right there at v 11. ‘Now, folks, we have the hierarchy.’ The hierarchy is no good unless you have the purpose. Structure is no good unless you know what you’re doing. Very simple! You can build a ship to float in the water, but if it sinks you haven’t the right structure.

Verse 12: “**For the perfecting of the saints**...”—the maturing of the saints. How are the saints going to be mature unless they are fed? How are they going to grow unless they have the Word of God? *They’re not!*

“...for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect... [sincere Christian] ...man...” (vs 12-13). How can you be perfect? *In Christ!*

“...unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ” (v 13). Brethren, I do take these words seriously to myself in what we learn here. I realize that as the only minister here, you’re sort of stuck with me. I’m glad you’re happily stuck with

me, if you view it that way. But if we're all yielding to Christ and growing in grace and in God's Spirit, then we're all going to grow and mature together.

I tell you, there is nothing more exciting and exhilarating than to really know and understand that Christ is with you, you're growing in grace and knowledge and all the rest of the other things really don't matter; they'll all fall in place at the right time.

There is nothing greater than that, and that's really truly what an abundant life really is. It's not just the physical goods and things that we have.

This ties in with Matt. 6:25-33, Luke 12:31: "But seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock..." (vs 31-32). We're not to fear! How many times have we been made to fear? We're not to fear. We can confidently have that confidence and faith in Christ.

"...for your Father delights... [that's why we're called, for the good pleasure of God's will] ...in giving you the kingdom" (v 32). That's the whole purpose for Christ:

- being the Door
- being the Shepherd
- being the One Who we follow

When we do that we will have the solution to all of our problems. It doesn't necessarily mean that we will solve every one of them the way that we may think, but ***Christ really is truly the solution to the problem!*** *Let's keep that in mind!*

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Romans 5:21
- 2) Romans 6:12
- 3) Acts 20:24-25
- 4) John 10:1-6
- 5) Matthew 7:13-14
- 6) Isaiah 40:11
- 7) 1-Peter 2:21
- 8) Romans 8:14-15
- 9) 2-Corinthians 3:17-18
- 10) John 10:8-10
- 11) Matthew 6:24-34
- 12) Psalm 84:9-12
- 13) John 10:11-14
- 14) Ezekiel 34:1-11
- 15) John 10:14-16, 26, 16-21
- 16) 1-Peter 5:1-4
- 17) John 21:15
- 18) Ephesians 4:11-13

19) Luke 12:31-32

Scriptures referenced, no quoted:

- John 3:16
- Jeremiah 23
- Ezekiel 13
- Matt. 6:25-33

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