

## Titus Part 3: Appointing Elders and Judges. Chapter 1:4-5.

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The following text is based on a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph.

**\*Portions of this sermon message have been edited to better transcribe the message. All verses from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.**

We are going to be continuing our study on the book of Titus, and if you've been with us for the last couple weeks, you know that we've just been covering the introduction or the prologue. I have got to tell you that for Paul sparing his words in describing himself in this very brief introduction, we find it is fraught with spiritual depth. It was very, very powerful. Amen?

Today we're going to continue on. We're going to be moving out of this greeting and introduction, and we're going to begin to see why the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle, and why he wrote it to Titus. We're going to get to take a good look at this. Let's begin by circling back to what we read in Titus 1:4-5—<sup>4</sup>To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Yeshua HaMashiac. <sup>5</sup>For this reason I left you in Crete.

What does this tell you? What it tells you is that if the Apostle Paul left Titus in Crete, then at some point, Paul was in Crete with Titus. It means that they were doing ministry together. And for whatever reason, we're not told, the Lord took Paul out to do another work somewhere. We're not sure, but one thing we are sure of is that he left Titus in Crete. And here's the key component as to why Titus was left in Crete—that you should set in order the things that are lacking. And appoint elders in every city as commanded you.

So here Paul commands Titus: get the church ready; get the assembly in order. There are things that are lacking; there are things that are deficient here, and they need to be established. And a significant part to making that happen is implementing elders now.

In the Greek, and this will mean a little bit more as we continue on, the word elder is *presbyteros*. This is where the Presbyterians get their name. Right? Essentially that denomination is referring to themselves as the elders. So that's a good name.

Be that as it may, Titus is being commissioned by the Apostle Paul to institute these elders in every city everywhere. You have to ask yourself the question, why? Why do they necessarily need authority; why do they need this structure that Paul is attempting to implement? Well, as we continue on today, you're going to see exactly why. And ultimately it's not just about Church growth or about growing these communities. It's about protection, security, and safety.

Now I want to point something out here— what Paul is commanding Titus to do here. It's not something that Paul contrived on his own; this is not his own cocktail of ideologies. Paul didn't sit down and say, "You know what? I think there should be elders here and I think we should start implementing this. I think we should start doing this." Paul is drawing from a resource to get this information. He is drawing from something to get this wisdom. He is drawing from the well of Torah.

I'm going to show you that Paul is drawing from the Torah in a moment, but you've got to understand that the very thing we see Paul commanding Titus to do you will also find Moses doing in the Torah. You find Moses commanding the children of Israel to do the same thing as they're going up to take the land and to spread out all across the land. This is what Moses says in Deuteronomy 16:18—<sup>18</sup>**You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment.**

Look at the context here. Israel is going up to take the land, and they're going to spread all over the land. Moses makes it clear that they need to establish order, and they need to have these elders, these judges, in place who are willing to lead and judge in righteousness. There is a lot of value to that because you want righteousness to reign in the land. And that is the very principle; this is all that Paul is doing. What he's implementing here in Crete through Titus is this very same principle.

To help you appreciate this a little bit further, I want to take you to II Chronicles 19:4. Here we're going to read about a very, very righteous king; one of the most righteous kings that ever lived. His name is Jehoshaphat. The transliteration of the Hebrew word used for Jehoshaphat is *Yĕhowshaphat*. And it's just a bit of irony, if you will, that the transliteration of his Hebrew name is a compound word—Yeho, *Yĕhovah*, meaning the Lord God, and his last part is *shaphat* which means judge. So out of that we get God judges, God has judged, or God is judge.

Well let me take you to II Chronicles 19:4 which is a very powerful passage—<sup>4</sup>**So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, now listen to this, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers.** You want to talk about the power of influence and passion that this man had. Go back and read the passage again and you will see he had a passion for the Lord. He walked with the Lord as his father David walked; he had the heart. Talk about a leader leading by righteousness. It was in his heart to follow the Lord. It sparked a revival. This is powerful!

Do you know what led up to this revival? It was the spread of Torah. He commissioned his leaders to go out all throughout the land and to teach the Torah. We find this in II Chronicles 17:9-10—<sup>9</sup>**So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.** <sup>10</sup>**And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.**

So there's this moment of teshuvah (repentance) and of turning back to God because this is what happened; this is what Jehoshaphat did. Are you catching where I'm going with this? Do you see the context that's being played out right here? This is the very context of where we're at in the book of Titus. What is happening in the first century is that the gospel is going out to the entire world. And what is happening is that the fear of God is falling on people; they're committing their lives to Yeshua because they know that He is going to judge their world. The Lord is going forth.

So we have the reality of the Word of the Lord and its teshuvah, which is the exact same thing that is going on here. Jehoshaphat was a part of the gospel, and we have the same thing in the first century. Now what's my point? What is the first thing Jehoshaphat does? What's the first thing we read about in the very next passage? II Chronicles 19:5—<sup>5</sup>**Then he set judges in the land.** It is what Jehoshaphat did; the very first thing he did. This is amazing?

So the gospel is going out in the first century. It is fresh; it is new. What is Paul doing with Titus? He is establishing judges. He's establishing the elders. He's commanding it to be done. This is the very thing that's happening with Jehoshaphat in putting judges throughout all the fortified cities of Judah. Isn't that interesting? When you go back to what we just read in Titus, Paul tells Titus to set up elders in every city throughout the land. In every city. It is almost like reading this verbatim.

Continuing in II Chronicles 19:5-6—<sup>5</sup>Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, <sup>6</sup> and said to the judges, "Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment." Ponder that. Let that sink into your heart for a moment. **You do not judge for man.** This is not about appeasing man; this is about implementing the judgment of the Living God.

You want to talk about a shattering revelation here. Consider who these elders are that Paul is ordering be established in Crete, and what they're really going to do. This is not about them. This is not about their opinion; this is not about them giving justice according to the structure of the governmental secular system. They're not sitting there trying to emulate what they're doing. This is about the judgments of the Living God, and that really puts things into perspective when you see what Paul is talking to Titus about in regard to establishing these elders. These elders are set to implement the spiritual of the Torah. And those who are elected have this tremendous weight in regard to that task. You think about the gravity of the situation. Think about the weight of responsibility that these elders, judges, and shepherds are carrying on their shoulders, and what they need to meet.

You know, it is interesting what you will read if you go to Matthew 18:18. What you'll read there is this statement—<sup>18</sup>**whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.** Do you know what Yeshua is referring to? I've heard many different ways that people have spun that passage. That passage is referring to II Chronicles 19:5. That passage is referring to judgment. In context, it is literally stating that men are not judging for man but for the Lord. So when the elders rule on a matter according to the will of the living God, what has been bound here will be bound in heaven.

I challenge you to go home and read Matthew 18:18 today. The verse is specifically stated in the context of judgment. You will notice something else about the next two verses in Matthew 18—that there is a mention that on the mouth of the testimony of two or three all things are to be established. Isn't that interesting? That is a principle that comes right out of Torah regarding judgment. You cannot bring judgment against a man without the testimony of two or three. And that's what this passage is all about. That's what this is talking about. You can feel the weight of what it is that Paul is conveying to Titus and what's going to be taking place.

Let me further build on this. I want to take you to the Torah and Deuteronomy 1:16—**Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him.'** And so here were given some qualifications of necessity that the judges need to follow in that they must judge in a particular manner—unadulterated, pure and righteously, with pure holiness. This is how it has got to happen.

Now it goes on in Deuteronomy 1:17—<sup>17</sup>**You shall not show partiality in judgment.** Why not? When you consider the reality that when you're judging you're not judging for Man but for the Lord, doesn't it make sense that you yourself will carry the characteristics and the nature of the Living God? It does! And one thing I know about the Lord is that He is not someone who shows partiality. Read

Deuteronomy 10:17; read Acts 10:34. These verses make very clear that the Lord is one who does not show partiality. So if there are men here on Earth that are operating in His stead by bringing forth righteousness and judgment for Him, they're going to be like Him. They must possess these attributes. They cannot show partiality.

Continuing on to Deuteronomy 1:17—<sup>17</sup>**you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's.** The simple point I want to make here is when you realize what Paul is commanding Titus to do, this is an awesome thing. They are instituting men to judge for the Lord. And since Paul realizes the gravity of the situation and what's being implemented, he's going to go on to give Titus a very important list of qualifications that they need to meet. I want to go through this list with you. In Titus 1:6 we read—<sup>6</sup>**if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife.** This would be one wife verses two, three, or four. Certainly I don't know how any man who has that many wives is going to have time for the church. But I don't think that's why the command is given that he needs to be **the husband of one wife.** In fact, I know that isn't it.

Why would He give the command that he has to be the husband of one wife? It is real simple. When men step up and they're going to be doing judgment for the Lord, they in all capacity must emulate the will of the Living God. And one thing I know is that the will of the Lord was not polygamy; the will of the Lord was established in the garden when He made Adam. Then He made his help mate Eve. He didn't make Eve, Barbara, Jan, and Sue. That would have happened if that was the Lord's will. If that was His design, He would have made it that way. This is not how He did it. Wife, singular, and a man shall leave his mother and father be joined to his wife. It doesn't say be joined to his wives.

So you think about this—why is Paul stating this? I want you to feel the weight. These men have to be in line with the Lord; they have to bear His character on their lives. This is a huge component of it. Continuing in Titus 1:6—**having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.** The transliteration for the word dissipation in the Greek is *asōtia*. I want you to understand that it really means a state of being unsaved. They are not in the faith. They're in a state of unsaved. If a man cannot train his child in the ways the Lord; if he can't instill and inspire his children to have a passion for Yehsua, you have a serious problem. Of if this child is insubordinate, meaning totally rebellious, and the father can't manage his home, how is he going to manage the assembly? He can't do it. This is the warning; these are the things that Titus needs to be on the lookout for when selecting men to fulfill these roles.

Moving on to Titus 1:7—<sup>7</sup>**For a bishop,** and I want to stop here. He's not giving a different title than that title we just looked at which was *presbyteros* which means elder. He's merely using another word to describe that very same office. Here I like a better translation which is overseer. But in the Greek translation the transliteration used for overseer is *episkopos* which is where we get the term Episcopalians.

Any time I teach on this passage, I can't help myself but to come up with a joke. You know that somebody should tell the Presbyterians an Episcopalian that they're actually the same thing. There's no difference between. I'm not going to do that. The point is that these terms *presbyteros* and *episkopos* are used interchangeably. We could say elder or we could say overseer because they are the same office.

Going back to Titus 1:7—<sup>7</sup>**For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God.** I'm not going to go through every one of these in detail, but I'm going to stop here at this point because Paul brings up

something very, very important in regard to understanding authority, positions of authority, eldership, and so forth. It is a stewardship. And talk about putting things into perspective! That really does it because you realize that you do not deserve the office if you are not a steward. Just because you went to school for four, six, or more years like the scholars have, it doesn't give you a right to the office. None of us have the right to be that mouthpiece for the Lord. It is a stewardship that we are given. It's not anything that I've done in this life that merits that position in and of myself, or that I've labored for, but it's a stewardship. And when you look at it that way, when you understand that it is a stewardship, now you look at the office as it's not yours. The Lord can take me out at any time, and you know what He can, He will, and He does. He can take out any leader at any time. I would be scared and trembling if you're in an eldership position, and you are not managing the Church, the flock, according to His will. Tremble!

I don't care what pastor you are; I don't care what professor you are; these things are real. We've been given a stewardship, and we need to have this perspective that it is steward. There's only one Rabbi; there's one person in charge. It is Yeshua. This is a very powerful statement.

Continuing in Titus 1:7-8—**not self-willed**. Obviously, if you understand you're in a stewardship position, you're not going to be self-willed. **Not quick tempered not given to wind not violent not greedy for money<sup>8</sup>but hospitable a lover of what is good sober minded just totally self control**. So here you have all these amazing, Godly attributes or characteristics, and you realize what Paul is doing here. He is describing the fruit of the Spirit. This is all the fruit of the Spirit. Any guy that has these characteristics indicates to me that he is walking with Yeshua, and he's in relationship with Him, and the Holy Spirit of the Living God abides in him. We know it because I can see the fruit of Spirit. This is absolutely beautiful. This is not a man who walks in the flesh. He's walking in the Spirit, and these are exactly the kind of men you want imposing judgment and have authority over the sheep. These are the kind of men you want there because I'm going to tell you it's a frightening concept to have someone who doesn't bear these characteristics but is given to covetousness. He can be persuaded. He'll end up showing partiality. If there is someone in authority that is given to the flesh, it is deadly to the community, to the flock. Very deadly!

Now there's something I want to add here in regard to this list of qualifications that Paul presents. There is something that Paul doesn't list here, and I could maybe argue for the fact that it's implied, but the Apostle Peter brings something to the table that is very important that I would like to throw into the ring. I Peter 5:1-2—**<sup>1</sup>The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: <sup>2</sup>Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly.**

Peter instructs that this is not by compulsion or out of necessity but willingly. I am not to shepherd just because I go to school for four years or seminary four to six years and then come out and say, "Well, I'm going to take this position because this is what I'm supposed to do because I went to school for this. That's why I'm here, and that's why I need this position. That's why I need this job." It's not supposed to be like that. It's supposed to be out of the heart's willingness. In other words, when a shepherd takes his position, he needs to love the sheep. The concern must be for the sheep. His labor in toil is for the sake of the sheep. He must labor in sincerity and integrity, and that makes sense. Why? Because that's who Yeshua is. He is the Great Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd; His concern is for the sheep. He goes out and gets the one lost sheep. He leaves the ninety-nine for the one. Our Rabbi, the Chief Shepherd, taught us what it really means to be a shepherd. He's the perfect example. Amen?

So this is not something that is not a necessity or that we are compelled to do because we need money. This is for the love of the sheep. That's what it has to be.

Moving on from that thought, I want to take you to the corresponding verse in Judges because I know this is where Peter got this from. Judges 5:9—<sup>9</sup>My heart is with the rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly with the people. Bless the Lord!

It is time for rejoicing when in fact you are part of a community, and you have leaders willingly offering themselves in the name of Yeshua. Bless the Lord! It is a powerful concept because that community has leadership that is of God. They have the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) dwelling within them.

There is one more thing worth mentioning in Peter statements. I want to take you back to I Peter 5:2-3—<sup>2</sup>Shepherd the flock... not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly. But then he goes on and says this—<sup>3</sup>nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

The position is not supposed to be a position of authority for the sake of authority. Have you ever seen those men who get in positions of authority and it is like whoa! He's intoxicated with the power; this is not the position for him. It's scary to see these types of people. It's not supposed to be like that. A true shepherd, when he comes to shepherd the sheep, is not looking to be a lord over those sheep. He's not exuding all this power, nor is he intoxicated with this vain glory, if you will. What he wants is he wants to lead by example, and this again goes back to the power of influence. True shepherds lead by example; good husbands lead by example; good fathers lead by example; and good friends lead by example. They simply are in relationship with the Lord, and they bear this fruit that inspires.

So a leader is supposed to be inspired by his own actions and by his own passion for the Lord Yeshua. Therefore, other people are supposed to be inspired to have that same passion, to have the same walk, and to do those things. This is what it means to be a leader.

I love what Paul says in II Corinthians 10:8—<sup>8</sup>For even if I should boast some-what more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed. This tells me a lot about shepherds, about elders, and about overseers in regard to what they're called to do. They're not called to implement all this power and authority. They're called to build. They are builders. The Chief Sheppard Yeshua is a builder. Right?

It doesn't mean we tickle the ears. You don't cater to itching ears. But you don't go out and oppress either. You don't go out to destroy. That is not what you do. So when we look at all these qualifications that Paul is listing to Titus in Titus 1:8, this is beautiful—<sup>8</sup>but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled. When you look at all these, you want to pay very, very close attention to what he's describing here. Why? Because if you need to get settled into a community and want to know that you're entering into a safe place, you better make sure, as I mentioned before, your leaders carry these attributes. This is what's required. It's a tall order.

Absence of these attributes in godly leaders will lead to total destruction. Communities will fall apart; they will be destroyed. The sheep will be scattered all over the place and the devil is going to wreak havoc.

Now having said that, I do want to point something out in regard to these attributes. And again this goes back to what we started talking about. Paul didn't create this checklist on his own. Paul drew from the well of Torah. Let's look at Exodus 18:21—<sup>21</sup>Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

Look at this—able man. These are the characteristics of true godly leaders. They fear God and are men of truth; and they hate covetousness. So they're not catering to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, nor the pride of life. Right here is condensed very succinctly exactly what Paul is conveying to Titus. OK?

So he's drawing in this reality of what his father, his father's forefathers, and their forefathers had done, and how they implemented and built up this Israel. And when they were walking in righteousness, it was because of this. Bless the Lord when the leaders lead and are willingly offering themselves. This is the effects that it has.

This is one of my arguments in regard to why this country has fallen. It is because of the leaders. It starts at the top. The leaders have started to open their hearts up to the world and started to let the world in. They started to compromise, and they started catering to ears. I tell you that every time you do that, it will result in a fall. And unfortunately the sheep will follow.

Now getting back to our letter in Titus; Paul is not done. He's got a little bit more to add in regard to these qualifications. Paul goes on to say in Titus 1:9—holding fast the faithful word. What do you suppose he's talking about when he says the faithful Word? He's talking about Scripture. He's talking about the Torah, the prophets, the writings, and the Tanakh. Right? This is what he's talking about. This is the faithful Word. Continuing in verse nine—as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine. Again, if you were here last week, we learned that the transliteration of the Greek word for doctrine is *didaskalia*. It means instruction or teaching. Continuing in verse nine—that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Now let me first say, how do you get sound doctrine? You get it from the faithful Word. Where you derive sound teaching or sound doctrine comes from here; it comes from the Torah and the prophets. It comes from Scripture. That's how we derive sound doctrine. In fact, Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. It's profitable for instruction and for teaching. The reality is that the only Scripture that existed when Paul made these statements was the Tanakh; it was the Old Testament. You find in Luke 24:27 the word in the Greek for Scripture (transliteration is *graphē*) is synonymously with the word Torah, the prophets, and the writings. I mean explicitly.

So when we see that these men, these elders, need to cling on to the faithful Word so that they by sound doctrine can go forth. What are they going to do with that? They're going to go forth; they're going to defend the faith. Right? They're going to meet those who come in to contradict truth head on. They're going to shut them down. Period! They are not going to allow Satan a platform to move through the community.

I love what the Lord says in Jeremiah 3:15—<sup>15</sup>And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. This is a prophecy that is literally being fulfilled in Paul's day with Titus. There it mentions another attribute you want to pick up on. The authentic, the

true shepherds, whom God has put in place according to his heart, they do something very specific: They feed the sheep.

You think about the Gospel of John after Yeshua has risen from the dead. This is post-resurrection. What does Yeshua ask Peter? "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter responds, "Yes Lord." "OK then, feed my lambs." He says the second time: "Do you love me." Peter says, "Yes Lord, you know I love you." "Tend my sheep." And He asks a third time because Peter denied him three times "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter knows what He's doing at this moment. "Yes Lord, You know all things. I love you." Then Yeshua responded, "Then feed my sheep." Yeshua wanted Peter to feed them with what? **With knowledge and understanding** (Jeremiah 3:15). This is what we're lacking in this country today. The shepherds are not feeding the sheep with knowledge and understanding.

What is this referring to? Are these just subjective terms? No. We need to define them within the Bible itself; we need to find these terms internally. Let me take you to the book of Hosea 4:6—**<sup>6</sup>My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.** Notice that these are used synonymously? To reject knowledge is to reject or forget the law. For me to walk away from the Torah is for me to walk away from knowledge. This is what knowledge is: It's the Word of the Lord, it's the Torah. Again in Deuteronomy 4:6—**<sup>6</sup>Therefore be careful to observe them [commandments, judgments, and statutes]; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'**

So understand something— when the Lord says in Jeremiah that He's going to send up shepherds; He's going to establish the shepherds according to His heart; and He's going to feed His people with knowledge and understanding, what is He feeding them with? He's feeding them with the Torah; the good Word of God: the law.

Do you remember the words of Charles Spurgeon? He said that a time is coming where instead of the shepherds feeding the sheep we will have clowns entertaining the goats. This is where we are at right now. Spurgeon knew it; he saw it on the horizon. This is what was happening to the church.

So looking at this understanding of what's being conveyed here in this prophecy, which was being fulfilled in Paul's day, this is what Paul is conveying to Titus. When we're looking at Titus 1:9, we find Paul saying to these elders that they need to **hold fast to the faithful Word**; they are not to forsake it or run away from it as they've been taught. Therefore by sound doctrine which comes from the Word, he's able to defend the faith. He's able to stand up against those who contradict.

Moving on to Titus 1:10—**<sup>10</sup>For there are many insubordinate.** Why is it essential that you have leaders clinging on to the word of the living God and feeding the sheep with knowledge and understanding? Because of this right here: Because there are many insubordinate and rebellious. **Both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup> whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households.** They are infectious. You could look at this like a cancer. **Teaching things which they are not for the sake of dishonest gain.** This is why we need shepherds. This is why we need them in place. There are rebellious people; there are people with the Spirit of Korah. There are deceivers who go out to deceive and are deceived themselves. They believe what they're saying, but they're deceived.

These people are teaching things they are not supposed to, and what are we supposed to do? Shut them down. They must be stopped. This is not P.C. The Bible does not live in a politically correct environment. Pastors are not supposed to be living in a politically correct environment. They go to war, they go and fight, they defend the truth, and they share the truth. This is essential for us today. You know this is the effect of what is happening in this country. It begins at the top.

Now I want to take you to Ezekiel and continue to build into this passage. In Ezekiel we find that the Lord is going to be dealing with shepherds. In Ezekiel 34:1-3 we read—<sup>1</sup>And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy 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? <sup>3</sup> You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

This is unbelievable! The shepherds are sitting in the positions to receive all the blessings from the people, but they're not doing their job. One of the primary functions of elders, *presbyteros* and *episkopos*, is to feed the sheep. They are commanded to feed the sheep. Do we have shepherds feeding the flock? If you're looking for a community, you need to be looking to see if the shepherds feed the flock.

Moving on in Ezekiel 34:4-5—<sup>4</sup>The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup>So they were scattered because there was no shepherd. I'm going to stop here.

It's not that there weren't men holding positions in a pastoral scenario. It wasn't that at all. There were some men officiating, if you will, in this office. But here the Lord says they were not His shepherds. Because they were not God's shepherds, what happened? The sheep are scattered, and they become this food for all the beasts of the field. This is why having legitimate leaders and a community is critical. Think about it this way—no shepherds, no sheep. It's that simple. If the shepherds are not ruling justly, feeding the sheep, or giving them the knowledge and understanding, these sheep are going to be dinner for the Demons. There will be spiritual carcasses laid out from one end of the room to the next. That's the reality, and the Apostle Paul knew this to be true, which is why he was so concerned about getting the proper leadership in place and installing a good, solid structure lest destruction come upon these body of believers.

In fact, I want to put this into context. Paul was so worried about this happening that when he was in Miletus he called for the elders in Ephesus, and he told them that they needed to come to him. He needed to talk to them. He need to convey a message to them, and this is the message—**Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers** (Acts 20:28).

I want you to know that this isn't my point, but I highlighted this so you can understand that those who are truly called by God, the Holy Spirit put them in that position of authority. That's the reality. If in fact that man was truly called by the Lord; if in fact that man is serving the Lord in that capacity; you can rest assured the Holy Spirit put him there. Continuing in Acts 20:28—**to shepherd the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.** Again, putting this in perspective especially from my side of the aisle here of being an elder; you get involved with authority. One thing you need to remember is that when you're interacting with the sheep, you need to keep in mind that the Lord Yeshua died for them.

He shed His blood. How should you handle them? With the utmost care. If Yeshua is willing to give His life for you, I need to take heed to that; I need to take that counsel.

Now, moving on to my point. Paul continues in Acts 20:29—<sup>29</sup> **For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.** Paul knows this, and with all due respect, if you study church history, and you've been with me long enough, you know this came to pass. The wolves in sheep's clothing went out, and they wreak havoc on the believers; they wreak havoc on the Churches. It's a reality, and Paul knew it was coming. But it gets worse—<sup>30</sup> **Also from among yourselves.** Within your own community of believers, the people that you love and get used to hanging out with, from within your own community **men will rise up** and do what? **They will speak perverse things.**

I always stop here when I when I teach on this passage. The transliteration of the Greek word for perverse that is used here is *diastrephō*. Do you know what it really means? It is translated as misinterpreted or distorted. And so when it says they are speaking perverse things, it means they're grabbing Scripture, and they're twisting it. They've misunderstood it; they are misinterpreting it. And then they're blown it all over the Church. This is what's going on. Why? **To draw away disciples after themselves.** <sup>31</sup>**Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears** (Acts 20:30-31). Paul knows that the attacks on the Churches of Yeshua are imminent. It is not a matter of if, but rather a matter of when.

So Paul, moving in wisdom of the Lord, is warning the elders beforehand. And his instructions are to defend the flock and hold the line when you're being asked to compromise, hold the line when they try to manipulate you, and hold the line when they try to get you to go one direction that is contrary to God's Word. This is what the elders need to do.

I love what the Lord says to Jeremiah in 23:3—<sup>23</sup>**But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.** Now this is the mere situation that was happening and that we read about in II Chronicles 19:4-5— revival! This is revival. He's calling his people back. Read John 10:27— <sup>27</sup>**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.** They won't listen to someone else; He calls them by name, and they follow Him. This is the Great Shepherd!

We go on in Jeremiah 23:4—<sup>4</sup>**I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord.** So it is with revival; this is the thing. Look at the effects and the beauty of having shepherds according to Yeshua's heart who emulate Him. There are massive positives to this. Number one, **they will fear no more nor be dismayed.** I will tell you something— when you look at the things that are happening in the world, we find that men's hearts are failing them over things that are coming upon the surface right now. It is not supposed to happen that way. We should not be shaking and quaking in our boots because ISIS is moving all over this world, or communism is taking root in this country. This is not about fear. That's the fear of the world. Good shepherds instill into the sheep the fear of God that takes precedence over everything that's going on in the world. You need to fear God! You need to look at Matthew 10:28 for instruction— <sup>28</sup>**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

This is where we need to be. Are we going to be solid believers? If we're going to inspire other people to accept Yeshua as Lord and Savior, and we have faith to believe that this world is not our home but that there is another world to come, then we will live like it. We will talk like it. And you will strengthen

others in the process—**In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world** (John 16:33).

Do we have Yeshua living within us? Then you will not be moved by all this insanity. And there is no other way to describe what is happening in this country and externally outside of our borders. God cannot be moved. Read Proverbs 24:16—<sup>16</sup> **For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.** The wicked can kill us, but when Yeshua says “rise,” the graves are going to open, and we are going to start singing. There's going to be rejoicing coming. Amen?

You need to take a look at this last statement—**nor shall they be lacking** (Jeremiah 23:4). Isn't this interesting? What did Paul say to Titus? Go establish elders so that they lack in nothing. It is the very same thing.

Let's go to I Timothy 5:17—<sup>17</sup> **Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.** These guys are immersed in the Word of God. When you have men that are immersed in the Word of God, men who are taking it in, and men who are consuming it all day long, what happens? They give it out because the Lord has put His words in their heart with the understanding that comes through the Holy Spirit. And they feed the sheep. They give it back.

These are the people you want to surround yourself with even if they are not an elder. These are the people you want to surround yourself with—people that are immersed right here. You know why? Because they have eyes to see and ears to hear. You don't want to be around those who are stumbling in the darkness of today's world.

Let me finish the Timothy 5:18 passage—<sup>18</sup> **For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."** Paul is actually drawing this passage from Deuteronomy 25:4, and what is happening in this passage? The leaders are justifying the righteous and they are condemning the wicked. That is what is happening. And when the leaders are justifying the righteous and they are condemning the wicked, then **do not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain** because they're doing what they're called to do. They're not judging for man; they're judging for the Lord. Amen?

Let's close with this verse—Judges 5:2—<sup>2</sup> **When leaders in Israel dedicate themselves, and the people volunteer, you should all bless ADONAI** (CJB). I just think about this passage. Let's just take a micro idea here: when the leaders of Corner Fringe are willingly offering themselves and have given of the heart, and the sheep are willingly offering themselves or volunteering for the Lord, we need to start rejoicing. It's the time to start blessing the Lord. You know why? Because we're operating within the confines of what the Lord designed. This is exactly what Paul is convening to Titus; what he wants to establish in Crete.