

“An Appeal To God’s Under-Shepherds” Part 2 (continues)

Holiness

1 Peter 5:1-4

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning, Bruce!

Bruce: Hey, I want you to recognize a group that’s here with us that is very, very encouraging. It’s the Mangus family, the Mangus guys. Would you guys stand up—just the boys, young men? Now take a look at this. This is our next generation of leaders in the church. And how grateful I am! You know, I’ll never see the results of what I’m doing till eternity comes. But you know, the great encouragement to me is seeing these young men come on Fridays. They could be at many other places. They come to sit at the feet of the Lord and the Holy Spirit to be taught because they’re going to be the leaders of the next generation of the Christian effort in the kingdom of God. So let’s just say thanks, guys. We appreciate you. (*Applause.*)

When people ask me if I’m encouraged by what’s going on on Fridays, I always cite them. (*Laughter.*) It’s not that I don’t appreciate you, but I’m not wrapped up in numbers. But the realization that we’ve got some young people, young teenagers coming here on Friday, do you realize the impact that’s going to have? What a great encouragement it is to have you guys with us. So thank you, men, for being with us. Don? (*Music.*)

Father, You are the hope of all glory. Thank You for Your mercy and Your grace. Thank You, Lord, that You do not treat us as our sins deserve. Have mercy on us this day. Cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And Father, may Your Holy Spirit help us to exalt the Person and the work of Jesus Christ today as I teach. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen!

Bruce: Open your Bibles, please, to 1 Peter chapter 5, looking at verses 1-4, where Peter has been teaching us about the qualifications and duties of church leadership. Now I want to explore this for a moment.

I asked myself recently why it is, in this book of holiness, which is the theme of the book of 1 Peter, that Peter is spending so much time talking in detail about the leadership of the church? You read verses 1-4 and he talks about the description of the elders, the pastors, the shepherds of the flock. And he also describes the duties of the elders, the shepherds, the pastors of the flock. Why is it, at the conclusion of this particular book which deals with the whole theme of persecution and opposition from the world against the church—why is it that Peter talks so much about leadership? Why is it that Peter says that you’ve got to have the right men with the right qualifications in the right position at the right time for the right reason? Why does Peter say that? Why is he emphasizing, in the midst of an arrangement of people who are being persecuted and opposed by the system of this world—why does he talk about the importance of leadership as he concludes chapter five of the book of 1 Peter?

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Participant: Because he was inspired by God.

Bruce: Well, that’s obvious. (*Laughter.*) I’m trying to figure it out logically. Yes, please?

Participant: Because the flock of Christ needs a shepherd.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: And the leaders being under-shepherds.

Bruce: Let me give you a little bit of a background, because you’re right. Certainly Peter was inspired by the work of God. We do need shepherds and under-shepherds. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd.

Just let me give you another thought about all this. The apostles understood one thing that we don’t emphasize in the church in our country today. And that is the wiles of Satan.

Participant: Mm-hmm. Amen.

Bruce: We don’t understand that. Now I’m not suggesting, men, that you look behind every tree and every rock and say, “Oh, Satan made me do it.” That is not what I’m saying. Nor am I going to take the position that says this—that I can bind Satan. I can’t bind Satan with anything. It’s ludicrous to think that I can say, “I’m going to bind you, Satan from doing something.” It took the Person and work of Jesus Christ—His death, burial and resurrection—to bind Satan. He has already done that, and it’s ludicrously prideful and audacious for me to say that I can bind Satan from doing anything. And yet we have a whole emphasis in the church that says, “You just need to bind Satan and things are going to be all right.” Men, there’s no way that we can bind Satan.

Now the Puritans understood this. For three hundred years part of their ministry was teaching about the wiles of Satan. In fact, in 1652, Thomas Brooks wrote one of the best works you’ll ever read, and it’s called *The Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, because he understood this—that we in the church are involved in spiritual warfare.

Participant: Come on, sir.

Bruce: We don’t understand that in our church today because we have just glossed over that and everything is designed to make people feel good rather than to help us to understand what the enemy is. It’s just like in our world today. If you don’t recognize your enemies and call them who they are, you’re never going to beat them.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It’s the same thing in the church. If we don’t understand the wiles of Satan, we’re never going to understand how we need to combat him. We need to be prepared.

Let me take you to Ephesians chapter six.

Participant: Bruce, what was the name of that Puritan author?

Bruce: Thomas Brooks, 1652. The work is called *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*. It’s a classic Puritan work.

Let me give you a quick definition of Puritanism since I’m always referring to them. If you want to talk about the Puritans, three things they are known for are these—the sufficiency of Scripture. Number 1 was *the sufficiency of Scripture*. Number 2 was

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personal piety, which means personal holiness—individual personal holiness. And the third thing was *a well ordered church life*.

Now it’s under this division of a well ordered church life that they understood that we are up against the spiritual forces of evil in this world that we need to identify and be prepared to take them on. And one of the things that the church must have is the right men in the right place with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason. And that’s because we do not understand very much in our culture the wiles of Satan.

Let me take you to Ephesians chapter six. The apostle Paul writes this in summary in the sixth chapter.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” Now notice. He doesn’t say, “Bind Satan because you can do it. You have enough strength in your own humanness to do it.” He says, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of *His* might.”

Who takes on Satan? Christ has done that. You and I don’t do that.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand.” What is our responsibility? To stand against the schemes of the devil. Those are the devices, the wiles of Satan.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand firm.”

What is our responsibility?

Participant: Stand.

Bruce: Stand! And the reason we can stand is that we are standing in the strength of *His* might.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: The last thing you ever want to do is to try to take on Satan. You will lose! It took the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ to defeat him and He has already done it. Therefore you and I can stand.

So when I talk about the wiles of Satan, I’m not talking about looking under every rock and saying, “Let’s go and bind Satan.” That’s not what I’m saying. What I’m saying is that we don’t understand the significance of our spiritual warfare, and that’s why leadership in the church is so important. If you don’t have the right men in the right place with the right qualifications at the right time with the right reason the church is going to suffer. That’s what Peter has been teaching us.

Let me give you an understanding of this. In about 1850 or 1860, there was a shift in theological training in America, and we began to develop a warped view of sanctification. It basically went like this. Surrender all. It basically said that sanctification is how much you surrender. If I can surrender everything, then I’m going to be sanctified. And the shift has gone from the Person and work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit working salvation in you at a major level to the idea that has become that if I just surrender, I’m going to be sanctified. The shift has gone from the strength of His might to what I can do

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personally. In fact, there is a hymn that we sing in the church that I have strong convictions that we should not sing.

Participant: “I Surrender All.”

Bruce: And that is this. “I Surrender All.” That’s an impossibility. To audaciously think that I in my pride can surrender all and be sanctified is ludicrous. Whoever does not understand that does not understand Romans chapters six and seven. Sanctification is a process and we’ve belittled it and warped it down to the point to that’s what I do. That is not sanctification. Sanctification is the process of what the Holy Spirit works in us. It’s a fight. It’s a battle. That’s why you need to have the right leaders. You need to have the right men in the right place in the right position, with the right qualifications for the right reason at the right time, because we’re involved, men, in spiritual warfare.

Now let me give you an understanding of this. I want to take you to and read a couple of quotes from a dear friend who we all know well. I’ve spoken about the Puritan John Rogers who was sacrificed, burned alive at the stake because of his convictions of the Person and work of Christ and the authority of Scripture. I’m going to quote today from our present John Rodgers.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I want you to understand something of what he is teaching us about sanctification and the importance of it. It is far more than just “I surrender.” Do you think you can surrender anything at all? The Scripture says this. (*Paraphrase.*) “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” Have you done that every second of your life? (*Laughter.*) Every single second? Have you done that? Then you haven’t surrendered! And salvation now is being taught that Bruce, all you have to do is surrender. And the problem, the difficulty with your life, is that you haven’t learned to surrender. You see, all the emphasis has been put upon us to do something to be sanctified.

You see, we don’t understand the significance of the wiles of Satan. We don’t understand spiritual warfare. Sanctification is a warfare! It’s a process.

Let me give you the big picture from Bishop John Rodgers. “Salvation in this article refers to salvation to its full Biblical extent, that is, for justification, or salvation from God’s condemnation and restoration to His favor in Christ Jesus. Secondly, for sanctification, or for the deliverance from the enslaving power of sin by our being increasingly conformed into the likeness of Christ. And thirdly, for glorification, or for us to be fully and finally transformed into the likeness of Christ and to share in the new life in the new heavens and earth at the great consummation of all things. Concerning the great divine work of salvation, the Scripture as God’s word is fully complete and sufficient. No individual person or corporate entity in or outside the church need or may add or subtract any conditions for salvation beyond what is stated in the Scripture.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now that’s as powerful a statement that you’re ever going to read about salvation. Salvation involves three things—your justification, your sanctification and your glorification. We have minimized salvation just to be eternal life. Salvation is a fight! It’s a battle! It’s warfare! That’s why you need to have the right men at the right

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place in the right position, with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason. That’s the significance of church leadership.

Now where is Satan going to attack us? What is the mission of the church? The mission of the church is to go into all the world and entertain. (*Laughter.*) No! The mission of the church is this: to go into all the world and preach the—

Men: Gospel.

Bruce: The gospel. Now do we preach justification, sanctification and glorification? That’s the gospel. Where do you think Satan is going to attack us? At the point of our misunderstanding justification, a warped view of sanctification and a misunderstanding of glorification. He’s going to attack us at our weapon, which is the power of the gospel.

Paul says this in Romans 1. “For it is the power unto salvation to all who believe.” Where do you think Satan is going to mess us up? He’s going to attack us at our greatest weapon, which is the proclamation of the Biblical gospel—justification, sanctification and glorification. That’s exactly where he’s going to do it. And what we’ve done, since about 1850, is that we’ve warped our view of sanctification, to belittle it and to minimize it and to think it’s this. All I have to do is surrender. Yes, Don?

Don: I think it was Donald Grey Barnhouse who said that if Satan would take over a town,--

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Don: He wouldn’t go into the bars and all the houses of ill repute and everything like that and bring crime. What he would do is that he would go into churches—nice churches with nice people, moral people, everything like that—but where Christ is not taught, and what you were saying just now, the gospel—justification, sanctification and glorification not being taught.

Bruce: Amen.

Don: Satan would have the victory there.

Bruce: That’s where he’s going to attack us, friends. And you and I need to understand the wiles of Satan. That’s what Paul is warning us about. Put on the full armor of God and stand. Yes?

Participant: Yes. Satan can’t keep people from being brought into the realm of Christ. That’s God’s work. But he can keep them from being matured in their sanctification by focusing on the wrong things in the church.

Bruce: Absolutely. Now let me finish what Bishop Rodgers has written in this wonderful book, something I’d encourage you all to get, called *The Essential Truths For Christians*. It’s a magnificent, logical understanding of the things we’re talking about—the power of the gospel. Remember, the gospel deals with your justification, your sanctification and your glorification. Let me read one more thing.

“The theme of salvation covers a wide range of God’s acts of deliverance in Scripture. These deliverances range from all sorts of human difficulties to the ultimate deliverance from sin and damnation. God’s gracious salvation of sinners is wider than most people suppose.

“Scripture uses the term *salvation* in a threefold manner. It uses the past tense—I was saved-- referring to our justification. It uses the present tense—I am being saved—

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referring to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification. And it uses the future tense—I shall be saved—referring to our complete and final salvation, glorification, which occurs at the final consummation of all things in and by the Person and work of Christ.”

Now where is Satan going to attack us? Right at the point of what we communicate from the pulpit about what the message of the gospel is.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s exactly where he is going to sneak in and say, “Let’s just tweak it a little bit because it’s going to be offensive to people. Let’s make sure they come back to be entertained and I’m going to change the content of what you do.” You see, that’s why Peter is saying this. You’ve got to have the right men at the right location in the right position, with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason. And that is because we need to realize that we’re in spiritual warfare.

One other quote from Bishop Rodgers. “For God to save us, He would not only have to deal with our guilt before Him, which He does in the Atonement, made on our behalf by the Son, but would also have to deal with the corruption of our nature, or our bondage to sin. This He will do by the work of the Holy Spirit in us in regeneration and by the process of sanctification. We can rejoice that the gospel contains God’s gift and promise of both the removal of our guilt and the progressive freeing of our wills.”

All you have to do, friends, is surrender! It’s really quite simple! (*Laughter.*) The problem with your life is that you haven’t surrendered all! Let’s just surrender all!

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: My goodness! To think that I have the audacity to think that I can surrender anything! Now if you’re going to sing that song in your church, it’s my conviction-- (*Laughter*)—my conviction. If you’re going to sing that song in your church, you need to have a preamble before you do it. You need to introduce it and say, “This may be our goal. But this is not something we can achieve in our own strength.”

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: Salvation is not about me. It’s about what the Holy Spirit does, and if you’re going to sing this song, sing it with this understanding. This is a goal that we will never achieve, but what we want to aim for is done by the Holy Spirit.

Don: Bruce, I’ll play that next week for our time of coming before God. How about that? (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: We’ll sing “I Surrender Some.” (*Laughter.*) When I sing that song in church, people look at me because I sing, “I surrender some.” (*Laughter.*) I can’t say that!

Participant: Try and give one-tenth.

Second Participant: Yeah, right. (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: That’s right. Yes, Tom?

Tom: Would you hold up that book? I think that’s just a phenomenal book and we all should be reading it. And we can talk to Bishop John about getting that.

Bruce: This is a marvelous work.

Tom: It’s wonderful. What’s the name again?

Bruce: It’s called *Essential Truths For Christians*.

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Participant: Excellent.

Tom: Yes, it is.

Bruce: It’s really excellent. It’s a theological study. It’s a systematic theology that is very logically presented, as I just read for you.

Let me help you to understand this. How is it that Satan is going to attack the church? And why is church leadership so important? Well, in a big, quick, overall summation, Satan is going to attack the church in two ways. First of all in some general senses—he’s going to attack the church in general terms. And they are basically these. He’s going to do it through heresy. He’s going to do it through apostasy. And he’s going to do it through divisions in the church.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: There are three ways in which he’s going to attack the church—heresy, which is deviation from or distortion of the truth. He’s going to do it through apostasy, which is denial of the truth. And he’s going to do it through divisions in the church, which is arguing over what is true.

Participant: Cliques.

Bruce: Cliques. It will manifest itself in two major areas—cults and counterfeits. Now folks, there is a lot of stuff out there in the Christian world that is either a cult or counterfeit because it deals improperly with the Scripture teaching on justification and sanctification and glorification. That’s the bottom line. That’s exactly where the wiles of Satan are going to infest the church and that’s why you’ve got to have the right men in the right position at the right time, with the right qualifications for the right reason, because we’re involved in spiritual warfare.

Participant: Bruce, would you mind going through those one more time for us?

Bruce: The general ways in which Satan will attack the church, the general wiles of Satan would be these—heresy, which is distortion or deviation from the truth, apostasy, which is denial of the truth, and division, which is arguing over what is true. Brian?

Brian: Heresy seems to be very subtle, though, almost to the point where you go, “Oh, we’re splitting hairs—“

Bruce: “I surrender all!” (*Laughter.*)

Brian: Right. It just seems like we split hairs for so long that—

Bruce: I surrender! That’s all I have to do! It’s a deviation. It’s a distortion of something that is true. You see, that’s the subtlety of it. Those are the wiles of Satan. It’s going to sound so good. It’s going to sound good, but not enough to do any good. Very much so.

Participant: I think there are so many heresies.

Bruce: Oh, absolutely.

Participant: I mean, you know, the poles that people have cited. So many, fifty or sixty per cent of Christians don’t believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation, or that we’re good enough to get to heaven on our own, or even reincarnation, a whole bunch of different things.

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Bruce: There are all sorts of them. Now I’m not going to be labeling all these things. I’m just trying to give you the big picture of why we need to have the right leadership in the church to fight these things. Yes, please?

Participant: There’s a young Baptist preacher. A man came to be immersed in a Baptist church. In the Baptist church they immerse the people. They put them under the water. The man said, “Do you have your wallet in your pocket?”

And the man said, “When I come to God, I’m bringing everything—my wallet, too.” (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: Sounds good to me. I surrender all. (*Laughter.*) Yes, please?

Participant: The heresy, the tactic, is the same that Satan used on Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Bruce: Oh, no question.

Participant: Where he posed the question, (*paraphrase*), “Really? Did God really say that?” From there it all goes down.

Bruce: His technique is this—doubt, distortion, denial, death.

Participant: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Bruce: Look at Genesis chapters two and three. Doubt, distortion, denial, death. That’s a summary of the Garden, the result of the Fall. And until you and I understand the result of that process of the Fall, John 3:16 makes no sense. You’ve got to understand the significance of the implications of the fall of man because that’s Satan’s technique and he’s doing the same thing right now—planting doubt in the church, distorting the truth of the church, denying the truth in the church, and the result is spiritual death. Now that’s how he does it—through heresy, apostasy and divisions in the church.

Now personally, Satan is also going to deal with individual people. Corporately, I just gave you the description of how he’s going to work on the church and that is through the changing of the doctrines of grace and the proclamation of the gospel. Individually, he’s going to work on us this way. Now I won’t go into detail, but our minds, our experience and our practice.

He’s going to attack us in our minds. You’ve got to think right. Oh, is that really what it says? You see, he’s going to deal with our minds. That’s why you’ve heard us say that you’ve got to think right before you act right. Paul says this. “Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Where is Satan going to get us? He’s going to get us in our minds. He’s going to get you to think differently. He’s going to say, “Well, maybe all you have to do to be sanctified is just to surrender all. Let’s sing this hymn.” (*Laughter.*) You see, that’s all you have to do. And so you and I walk away saying, “Boy, I’m really sanctified because, you know, I’ve just surrendered all.” And then you look at somebody walking down the street in short skirts and you blew it. It’s over!

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: You see, that’s how he’s going to attack us individually, in the mind, how we think—how we think about justification, how we think about sanctification and how we think about glorification. Carl?

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Carl: Yeah, Bruce. You’ve got pastors that are sitting in the pulpit who are saying, “All we’ve got to do is stamp out Satan. All we’ve got to do is stamp Satan out. And he is inspiring the men in the pulpit and the people are, well,—

Bruce: They buy it. They understand it. You see, that’s why you have to have the right people in the right position, men, with the right qualifications. Church leadership is not a popularity contest. It’s something that God qualifies a man for, putting him in that position in order to prevent the things that we’re talking about from happening, corporately to the church or individually to the believer. That’s why you’ve got to be a shepherd. Feed the flock, as Peter says. That’s why you’ve got to be an overseer. You’re among them, but you’re over them. You oversee them. You superintend their well-being. And today we’re going to talk about the last qualification he says, about being an example.

But the way that Satan is going to attack us individually is this—through our minds and through our experience. We’ve become so experientially oriented that that’s what we’re looking for. And we’re motivated by high emotions, and we’ve become emotionally and experientially oriented.

Take the example of a church retreat. Everybody goes on a church retreat. They come back and they’re very, very excited. Then it wears off in about five days. It’s because we’re looking for the next experience!

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: That’s where he’s going to attack us. What is it you need to know to regenerate your batteries? Let’s find a church that’s going to recharge your batteries. Folks, you don’t go to church to get your batteries recharged.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You go to church to give a blessing to the Man who saved you, the Lord Jesus.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You go to church to give a blessing, not to get one. And yet we look for experience. How many times have you heard somebody say this? “I’m not going back to that church because I didn’t receive a blessing.” That’s experience orientation! That’s exactly what Satan wants you to do! Look for what *you* want, rather than going with the sufficiency of Scripture in what worship is, and that is to go and exalt the Person and work of Christ. You go and *give* something in worship and the result is what? You receive.

And thirdly, your practice. He’s going to attack your practice. He’ll basically say, “You don’t need to do that. You don’t need devotions. You don’t need any time in the Scripture because you have surrendered all! You’re complete! You’re sanctified! You’re holy because you have surrendered all! You don’t need to worry about the practices of personal piety and discipline in the church.” You see, that’s where he’s going to attack the individual—in the mind, in the experience, and lastly in the disciplines and practices of the Christian faith. Yes, please?

Participant: The Scripture says to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Bruce: I wish I could do that.

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Participant: (*Unclear.*) But *The Message* Bible actually says this, which helped me considerably. “Take every loose thought, emotion or impulse captive.”

Bruce: Boy, I wish I could do that. That’s an impossibility for me. I can’t do that for one moment in my life. I just wish I could. That’s why I need a Savior, men.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s why I need a Savior. I can’t do that. I can’t take every thought captive. I can’t take every initiative captive. I can’t do that. I want to do it, but I can’t! I need a Savior who says, “Bruce, you’re covered. You’ve been justified. I’m sanctifying you. And one day I’m going to glorify you. Do you understand that? It’s not about you and what you do. It’s about who I am and what I’ve done for you.” I wish I could do that. I can’t. I just can’t do that. Yes, please?

Participant: I think that we don’t realize how much us trying to do this on our own, how much that stifles our growth and how much that keeps us from being bold. I think it’s 1 Corinthians 1:30 that talks about justification, sanctification being all from God. Is that the correct verse?

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: That is such a freeing verse. So if anyone is struggling with that, that verse says that you are covered. And you know, it’s not you whatsoever. Being taught that, it was so freeing and it allowed me at least to be so much more bold. Though I’m not good enough to go out and do this, I can do it anyway because Christ covers me, He covers us. And that was just freeing and allowed me to do so much more.

Bruce: Amen, amen. Now my point is this. Remember, this is all introduction today. (*Laughter.*) This is introduction to help us review what Peter has been teaching us about the need for proper church leadership. That’s our text today. It’s 1 Peter 5:1-4. I’m trying to give you a big picture of the realization of why Peter is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about the need for adequate church leadership. It’s because we’re involved in spiritual warfare and we have to deal with heresy, apostasy and divisions in the church. And if you don’t have the right leadership to deal with those things, the church is going to be eaten alive by the wiles of Satan. Men, we are involved in spiritual warfare.

Now I’m not being panic driven here. I’m just trying to be realistic. That’s why Peter is saying that it’s so important to have the right people in the right place at the right time for the right reason with the right qualifications. Yes, please?

Participant: How do you stand firm, then?

Second Participant: You stand. You stand some more.

Bruce: Three times he says in Ephesians six.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: How do you stand? The righteous walk by—

Men: Faith.

Bruce: You do it by faith. Lord, I’m just going to have to stand. I can’t do it. Will you stand with me? Be my strength. Notice Ephesians 6 verse 10. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” Whose strength is it?

Participant: His.

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Bruce: His. Who’s might is it?

Men: His.

Bruce: I’m going to walk by faith. Lord, You’re going to have to do this for me because I can’t surrender all. I can’t take every thought captive. You’re going to have to do that for me. And when I don’t, remove those thoughts from my mind because it’s an impossibility for me to do that in my own strength. I’m going to have to do it because of Your strength in me. It is Your strength that makes it happen. I have to accept that and walk by faith. Therefore I’m going to stand in the promises that You give me. It’s not about me. It’s about who You are and what You’ve done for me.

That’s why, years ago, when we had that little bracelet—what would Jesus do, WWJD? I have no idea what Jesus would do. (*Laughter.*) It’s ludicrous for me to think, “Oh, that’s what Jesus would do.” That I can think like that—that’s ridiculous! The verse that we have is this. WHJD—what has Jesus done?

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: Now I know what Jesus has *done*, and I’m going to stand in that, not try to figure out what I need to do because of what Jesus would do in my shoes.

You see, the emphasis is this. I understand what Jesus has *done*. And that’s what I’m standing in. I’m standing in what He has *done*. And I’m going to be strong in the strength of His might. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Just following upon the standing part, I’m looking, of course, at that verse a lot of us know—Exodus 14:13. (*Laughter.*) “And Moses said to the people, “Fear not. Stand firm and see the salvation of the LORD which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again.”,”

Participant: That’s right.

Ted: “The LORD will fight for you. You only have to be silent.”

Bruce: Ah, yes. My great verse. (*Laughter.*) I don’t mean to be facetious or funny when I say this, but when somebody says, “What’s your life verse?”, I have two of them. One is Genesis 1:1.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: The most important verse in all the Bible. If you don’t understand Genesis 1:1, John 3:16 doesn’t make any sense. And everything I’m saying today doesn’t make any sense if you don’t understand Genesis 1:1.

Participant: Amen.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 1:1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Bruce: And the second life verse for me is Exodus 14:14, which Ted just read. “I will fight for you when you remain silent.” I’m just going to stand in the strength of His might. And sometimes my best response is to keep my mouth shut so that God will work and I don’t interfere with things.

Now men, I’m trying to give you an understanding of the big picture of why leadership in the church is so important. Now let me go back and let’s turn to 1 Peter chapter five.

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Now he’s coming towards the end of the chapter of this book. He has been talking about the church being opposed by the system of this world, about the church being persecuted by the system of this world. He now comes up with a summary statement which basically says this. It’s because of our understanding that we are involved in spiritual warfare that we must have this. And he says this to us in chapter 5, verses 1-4.

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight—not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.””

Peter has taught us this so far. Church leaders, be shepherds. Feed the flock. We feed them with the word of God. We teach them Biblically the full counsel of God as it deals with our salvation—our justification, our sanctification and our glorification. And you fight off heresies, you fight off the apostasies and you fight off the divisions of the church when you argue over truth. And you need to have people who can do that. That’s what a shepherd does—the right man in the right position, with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason.

The second thing he says is this. Not only be a shepherd; be an overseer. You’re among them, but you’re also over them. And that’s where you get your balance. I’m one of them, but I also have a responsibility over them. And you have to balance the *among* and the *over*. That’s where you become an overseer. You superintend the well-being of the flock to make sure they’re safe, to ward off the fiery darts of the evil one. When you see Satan through heresy, apostasy and divisions in the church appearing, you fight it off because you’re an overseer. You superintend the well-being of the flock.

And thirdly, he’s going to give us the third qualification for church leadership, and that is this. Be an example. And he gives us three attitudes of what it means to be an example of a shepherd and an overseer, three highlights.

First of all is this. Have a sense of *willingness*. There’s a willingness which you must have. And notice this. “Not because you must, but because you are willing.” Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1, to set your mind on being an overseer, if you do that, you “desire a noble task.”

Now notice. It is not the position of overseer, but it’s the task of overseeing that you desire. There’s a difference. You don’t desire the position. You desire the activity. It is not the position of an overseer—to put you over them—that you desire. It’s for you to have the willingness and the desire to do the overseeing, which means that you have to figure out the balance of being among the sheep but also over the sheep. You desire the activity, not the position. So there must be a willingness. That’s the attitude of a church leader.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

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Participant: This is a good distinction because I know that in the church there are leaders who desire the position—

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: But really don’t want to exercise the activity because it creates discord, disharmony, time, these things.

Bruce: Yes. Peter’s point is this. You’re not desiring the position. You’re desiring the activity. That’s a good thing. It’s a noble task to want to be a shepherd, to want to be an overseer. And if you have that desire, then get the right training to do that. So there must be a willingness that you want to have.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:16 that “I’m compelled to preach.” He says, “I’m compelled!” He can do nothing else. It’s not the attitude of a draftee who wants to be AWOL. But it’s the attitude of an enlistee who wants to help the cause and to win the battle. That’s the desire and the willingness that one has to be a church leader.

Now I gave you my experience when I was pasturing my church in Chicago, where we did not have qualified church leaders. And I taught the church for about nine weeks so that people would recognize what a church leader is—the qualifications and the duties. And then I said to the men, “If any of you desire this office, which is one of the qualifications of the elder, come and see me.”

Now I had six men come to me who said, “I think I desire the activity of being an overseer.” So we spent the next three years training them to be the right men at the right time, with the right qualifications in the right position, doing the right thing at the right time. It took three years to train them to do that. They had to have the willingness first of all to want to do it—not to seek the position, but to seek the activity of overseeing.

So Peter says that you’ve got to find people who have the willingness because it’s a noble task when you want to engage in the overseeing of the flock.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Give not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”—the same thing as the attitude of a willing servant in the church. Your willingness to serve will be directly related to how you communicate your willingness to lead. There must be a willingness that we have. That’s the first thing we’re to give an example of.

The second thing he says is that there must be an *eagerness*—“not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” And the point here is that no person should dare accept the office of shepherd/overseer, or render service, for what he can get out of it, but what he gives to it. In other words, he uses the money example—“not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” You don’t do it because of the potential position you’re going to have. You don’t do it because of the reputation you’re going to get. You don’t do it to build your resume. You do it because you have an eagerness to serve.

Now who qualifies people to do that? The Holy Spirit does. That’s why the role of the church is to recognize men who have this willingness, men who have this eagerness. And you say, “Oh, there’s one.”

Participant: There you go.

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Bruce: “Let’s set him apart to be one of our shepherds, to be an overseer. I recognize that in him,” because the Holy Spirit creates the leaders in the church. Our culture doesn’t do that. There must be a willingness and an eagerness. Yes, please?

Participant: Do you think that on August 22, when they block Liberty Avenue, that there will be thousands of people to stand and be silent and pray about Planned Parenthood?

Bruce: Well, if the Lord leads you to do it, then go do it. If He doesn’t, then don’t do it.

Second Participant: Right.

First Participant: That’s the type of thing you’re talking about.

Bruce: No.

Participant: No. Why?

Bruce: I’m talking about leadership in the church.

Participant: That’s leadership in the church.

Men: No.

Bruce: No, it’s not.

Participant: You set an example to start praying silently.

Bruce: Let’s keep it in the context of what Peter is saying. He’s not taking this into the cultural world yet. He’s saying that you’ve got to find the right people. Now the Holy Spirit will lead those leaders to know what to do.

Participant: Sure.

Bruce: But it doesn’t say anything here about standing up against Planned Parenthood. That may happen, but keep it in the right context. The context is this. Do you have the right people in the right position to ward off the wiles of Satan? And the Holy Spirit will take those men and it might be that He’ll lead you to do that. But that’s not the point of this particular passage, to protest Planned Parenthood. It’s to have the right people qualified. The Holy Spirit will then lead them to do what they want. So your example is an example of something that might happen. But that’s not what Peter is talking about. Peter is saying to have the right people in the right position at the right time, with the right qualifications for the right reason.

Participant: Amen. Right.

Bruce: That’s what you have. And you need people who have a willingness to do that and people who have an eagerness to do it. And they have it for the right motive.

And the last thing Peter would say would be this. The third attitude is not only being willing, not only being eager, but also doing it *sacrificially*—“not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being an example.” Not domineering lords, but willing and eager servants. Remember this. Suffering saints need serving shepherds.

This is a very difficult thing to understand—the significance of being an under-shepherd. Christ Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. But He does appoint and qualify some people through the work of the Holy Spirit through their justification, through their sanctification, and through their glorification, potentially in the future, to qualify them to be in a position to ward off the fiery darts of the evil one. That’s why Peter says that it’s

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so important to have the right men in the right position with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason. Yes, Jim?

Jim: Yes. I think, you know, hearing what you said about a church not going any further than its leaders, surveys say that over fifty per cent of clergy in America don’t even believe in the Resurrection.

Bruce: Right. Isn’t that amazing? Talk about heresy!

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: Talk about apostasy! That’s rampant in the church. Do you have people in your church that can ward off those fiery darts? That’s what Peter is saying. You’ve got to have the right people to do that, because they’re going to have to take on those issues of Satan’s doubt, denial, distortion and death. Yes, please, Bob?

Bob: Bruce, it strikes me that this term, the last one you’re on, *example*, sets the scene for a lot of things that we’re to be doing, whether that’s with my family, whether in raising my children, whether that’s how I do things in church, whether I’m the employee. It’s the example we set that has such a tremendous impact on people.

Bruce: Absolutely. And you must have leaders who give that example.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: Yes, Brian?

Brian: I think that with us and what we’re learning here is that one of the things that we need to do is like you say, never to gripe or complain. We build leadership and if they are not doing these things, it’s not “Hey, listen! Let’s point out all of your flaws and point out everything that you’re doing wrong.” But I think for the most part that those who are serving are serving for the right reasons. They may not have had the blessings to receive these teachings. If we ask them the question, “Hey, listen. Can you help me understand? I understand the Bible to say this. Can you help me understand?” I think that if we ask them questions and sit down with them loving, rather than criticizing and battling with them, that might start to turn about in different ways through dialogue.

Bruce: That’s a good point. Now men, my intention in having gone through this with some passion today is not to suggest that you go blow up your church and start all over again. (*Laughter.*) That is not what I’m saying. Bishop Rodgers gave us a wonderful summary statement last week. He said that it’s not the structure of the church that’s the issue. It’s the quality of the leaders in that structure. Are they functioning correctly?

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: And Peter says this. Whatever structure you have, you need to have leaders who are shepherds, overseers and examples.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s what you want in your church. Now my counsel to all of us and my encouragement to all of us is men, let’s be that for our church. This is an admonition and instruction for us to become those kinds of men so that the Lord might say to the congregation of your church, “Oh, there is one! Oh, there’s another one!” Let’s set them apart, that they will be leaders to ward off the fiery darts of the evil one—to ward off the heresies that permeate the church, the apostasies that permeate the church and the divisions that disrupt the church. We need leaders who can fight that because the

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kingdom of God and the glory of God is at stake. May God be pleased to build leaders in our church who can do that.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Let’s pray. Lord, we’ve touched on something that is dear to You because You’ve written it to us. And Father, I would charge the men in this room. Am I that kind of a man? Is that who I am? Am I a shepherd? Am I an overseer? Am I an example? Do I have the attitude of willingness, the spirit of eagerness and the heart of a sacrificial servant? Father, would you make us those kind of men so that we can give leadership to the church? And may it be done for Christ’s glory. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Amen. (*Applause.*)