

1 Peter 5:2

by John Gill

John Gill emphasizes the vital role of pastors in feeding and caring for the flock of God with love and integrity.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:2

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Pastoral Care"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the responsibility of church leaders to feed and care for the flock entrusted to them by God. He explains that this feeding involves providing sound doctrine and spiritual nourishment, rather than succumbing to false teachings or personal gain. Gill stresses that pastors should serve willingly and with a pure heart, motivated by love for Christ and a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of their congregation. The sermon highlights the importance of pastoral oversight, urging leaders to act as true shepherds who protect and guide their flock with diligence and compassion.

Transcript

Ver. 2. Feed the flock of God which is among you,.... Some read, "as much as in you is"; that is, to the utmost of your power, according to your abilities, referring to the manner of feeding the flock, doing it in the best way they are capable of; but the phrase is rather descriptive of the flock to be fed, which points it out, and distinguishes it from all others, and for which they should have a particular regard; it being the flock, as the Syriac version renders it, which "is delivered unto you"; which was committed to their care, and they were made overseers of, and stood in a special relation to; wherefore it was incumbent on them to regard them, so as they did not, and were not obliged to regard, any other distinct flock: by "the flock of God"; or, "of Christ", as some copies read, is meant, not the whole world, which Philo the Jew {r} calls the greatest and most perfect, *tou ontov yeou poimhn*, "flock of the true God"; but the church of God, over which they were elders or pastors, consisting of Christ's sheep and lambs, he ordered Peter to feed, as he now does his fellow elders; and because they are the flock of God, which he has chosen, distinguished, and separated from the rest of the world, and has made the care and charge of Christ; put them into his hands, whence they are called the sheep of his hand; which he has purchased with his blood, and effectually called by his grace, and returned them to himself, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who before were as sheep going astray, and folded them together in a Gospel church state; all this is a reason, and a strong one, why they should be fed; not with every wind of doctrine, which blows up the pride of human nature, and swells men with vain conceits of themselves; nor with the chaff of human doctrines; nor with trifling and speculative notions; but with knowledge and understanding of divine and evangelical truths, with the words of faith and sound doctrine, with the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ; with the Gospel of

the grace of God, which contains milk for babes, and meat for strong men; and with a crucified Christ himself, who is the bread of life, and whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; by directing them to his person, blood, and righteousness, to live by faith on; by preaching the doctrines of peace and pardon by his blood, atonement and satisfaction by his sacrifice, and justification by his righteousness, and complete salvation by his obedience and death: in short, feeding includes the whole of the pastor's work, the ministry of the word, the administration of ordinances, and the rule and government of the church, in the several branches of it; for the same word signifies to rule as to feed; and which work is further expressed by

taking the oversight thereof; that is, of the flock; or "take the care of it", as the Syriac version renders it, and adds, "spiritually"; in a spiritual manner; which is an interpretation of the phrase: an acting the part of a bishop or overseer of it, as the word signifies; looking diligently to it, inspecting into the various cases of the members of the church; using diligence to know the state of the flock, and performing all the offices of a careful shepherd; as feeding the flock; and not themselves; strengthening the diseased; healing the sick; binding up that which was broken; bringing again that which was driven away, and seeking that which was lost; watching over them that they go not astray; and restoring of them in the spirit of meekness, when they are gone out of the way; and overlooking both their practices and their principles; admonishing, reproofing them for sin, as the case requires; and preserving them, as much as in them lies, from wolves, and beasts of prey; from false teachers, and from all errors and heresies: all which is to be done,

not by constraint; or with force, in a rigorous and severe manner; for this may be understood actively of pastors not forcing their flock, over driving them, or ruling them with force and cruelty, complained of in Eze 34:4 or passively, of their being forced to feed the flock, and superintend it; as such may be said to be, who enter into the ministry, and continue in it, because obliged to it for want of a livelihood, and not knowing how to get one any other way; or through the pressing instances of relations, acquaintance, and friends; this ought not to be a matter of necessity, but of choice; they should be induced to it by no other necessity than what Christ has laid upon them, by calling them to the work, and furnishing them for it with the gifts of his Spirit; and should engage and continue in it by no other constraint than that of his love; wherefore it follows,

but willingly. The Vulgate Latin version adds, "according to God", and so some copies; according to the will of God, and agreeably to his word; and the Ethiopic version renders it, "with equity for God"; with all uprightness and integrity, for the sake of the honour and glory of God; this should be done with all a man's heart and soul, and should spring from pure love to Christ; for no man is fit to feed Christ's lambs and sheep but those who sincerely love him; see Joh 21:15, and from a cordial and affectionate concern for the good of souls; and from, an hearty desire unto, and delight in, the work itself; otherwise all he does will be as a task and burden; he will do it grudgingly, and with negligence, and will murmur under it, at least secretly. The Arabic version renders it, "watching, not forced watches, but willing ones". This contrast of phrases seems to be Jewish, or Rabbinical {s}; it is a tradition of the Rabbans;

"blood which is defiled, and they sprinkle it ignorantly, it is accepted; presumptuously, not accepted; of what things are these said? of a private person; but of a congregation, whether ignorantly or presumptuously, it is accepted; and of a stranger, whether ignorantly or presumptuously, Nwurb Nyb onwab Nyb, "whether by constraint or willingly", it is not accepted:"

it follows here,

not for filthy lucre; not from a covetous disposition, which is a filthy one; and for the sake of gaining money, and amassing wealth and riches, as the false prophets in Isaiah's time, who were never satisfied; and the false teachers in the apostle's time, who, through covetousness, made merchandise of men, and supposed that gain was godliness; whereas there is no such thing as serving God and mammon; and as the work of the ministry should not be entered upon, and continued in, with any such sordid view; so neither for the sake of gaining glory and applause, a presidency, and chief place in the churches, and a name among the ministers of the Gospel, and credit and esteem among men:

but of a ready mind; or, "from the whole heart", as the Syriac version renders it; and in a cheerful view of reproaches and persecutions, of the loss of credit and reputation, of worldly substance, and of life itself; and with a sincere concern for the glory of God, and the good of immortal souls; being ready to do everything with cheerfulness, that may contribute to either of these. The Ethiopic version renders it, "in the fulness of your heart with joy".

{r} De Agricultura, p. 195. {s} T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 25. 1. Vid. T. Bab. Avoda Zara, fol. 54. 1. & Maimon. Hilch. Issure Mizbeach, c. 4. sect. 5, 6.

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