



## The Shepherd's Exhortation, Part 4

### Selected Scriptures

When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, remember how he answered? He summarized everything in two commandments, right? Look at Matthew 22 and I'll start in verse 35. "One of them," one of the Pharisees, he was a scholar of the law, "asked Jesus a question, testing him." So he had mixed motives in asking this question. But he asked him this question, testing him, verse 36, Matthew 22, "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment.'"

So stop there for a moment. Those who love anything more than God, in effect hate God. John says in 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world." So don't love the world's systems. Don't love its politics. Don't love its ambitions and its aims. Don't love its pastimes and sports and diversions and activities. Don't love its religious cultures. Don't love its idols and its temples. Don't love its ceremonies

and its sacraments and all of its, all that it counts as vital and important.

Why? Because John says, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Translation: A person who loves the world or the things in the world does not love God, but what? Hates him. The absence of love for God and the presence of love for the world and the things in the world is hatred of God. John does make it that black and white. Same thing is true of those who do not love Christ. Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema." Anathema is the word, accursed, strong. It's really damned to hell. Let him be eternally cursed to hell if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, we all know people who claim to love Christ. They live however they want to. Are we concerned? We, do we, do we love them? Do we love God enough to tell them the truth? Do we love them enough to tell them the truth? Are we compelled? Because that's what shepherds do. We love God, and that means we love his people, and so we exhort people to love God and to love his people.

The essence of idolatry is to love anything or anyone more than God and more than Christ. If love for Christ is to love

what Christ loves and hate what Christ hates, we need to ask, are our affections lined up with his? If they're not lined up with his, are we concerned about that or do we walk away, just saying, boy, that was a tough point, but, whew! think I ducked it.

Listen, beloved, as pastors, we long more than anything to see you love God, to love his Christ, and to do so with all your being: whole-souled, whole-hearted worship, serving God with joy and gladness of heart, without any reservation, without any qualification, with no compromise. This is the blessed life. This is the blessing of God. It's a sharing in the eternal life of God. It's partnering with him in the fellowship of eternal life.

This goes a step further in Matthew 22, because in Jesus' answer, love for God is joined with love for others. Loving God is expressed primarily in loving people. Note the connection there. Go back to verse 37. Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment, and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and prophets.'"

Just as the first table of the Ten Commandments, or the first part of that, is about loving God, and the second table is about loving one's neighbor, in the Ten Commandments, the two are etched in stone and cannot be separated. They're not to be separated. The Apostle John drives this ethic home. He connects the two, love for God, love for neighbor, in how fellow Christians are to treat one another in the church. 1 John 4:20, "If someone says 'I love God,' but he hates his brother, he's a liar." Call it out. He's a liar. "For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen, and this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."

No professing Christian in the church would ever admit to hating a brother or sister in Christ. They wouldn't be that stark about it. They wouldn't be that honest. If they have hatred in their heart toward someone, they're not going to say it. But how often do we see, when someone is offended, will a professing Christian who's offended avoid somebody at church? Will they see them and walk the other way? Do professing Christians hold continual grudges, harbor long-term bitterness? Do they slander one another and treat one another with malicious suspicion?

Beloved, this not, not to be. It ought not to be. We all struggle with many things, don't we? We struggle with our feelings, our emotions. We can be overcome at times with hurt, pain, sadness, sorrow, fear, anger. We are all and when we, when we rehearse that and nurse that in our hearts, you know what we're doing? We're succumbing to the temptation to love ourselves rather than love God in others.

Me being offended, me being hard done by? Who am I? Who are we? We're nothing. What we're concerned about in these offenses, it's that the other person is living in sin, that the other person is enslaved to bitterness, and anger, and fear, and anxiety. That the other person is caged, enslaved, and poked by the enemy through the bars.

This is why the shepherd's exhortation is so vital, absolutely critical for a healthy church life, for the good of the members. This is why the ministry of exhortation isn't only for the shepherds. It's for the whole church. So one more reason why exhortation is necessary in pastoral ministry, number five: Shepherds set an example for other Christians who are also called to exhort one another. You're like, rats, we're not off the hook.

Pastors are to set an example in the ministry of the Word, how they use it for "teaching and reproof and correction and training in righteousness." In fact, the writer to the Hebrews calls us to pay attention to this very thing in Hebrews 13:7, "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you, considering the results of their conduct. Imitate their faith." By "imitate their faith," he means, he means imitate the practice of their faith. You see how they're doing? You go do it. Follow the model that they said in working out their faith. Mimic their ministry, especially this ministry of exhortation.

Since we all participate in that ministry, Hebrews 3:13 says, "Encourage one another." That's *parakaleo*. "Exhort one another day after day, as long as it is called today, lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." There's another reason for exhortation, right? We sin. We keep, we keep getting deceived by it. And if we are continually deceived, you know what starts to happen? Calluses build up, and we harden, and we're dull to exhortation.

Exhortation is not the sole purview of pastors. Every church member is to love one another by this mutual exhortation. This is how Christ ministers to his body, to every single individual, is by every single individual ministering to one

another in the loving exhortation. Go to 1 Thessalonians 5, 1 Thessalonians 5:12. In that verse, Paul, he exhorts the church to regard their leaders, connects the example of the leadership with congregational responsibility. Take a look at 1 Thessalonians 5:12. He says, "We ask of you, brothers, that you know those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you."

I told you that term admonish is *noutheteo*. *Noutheteo* is a stronger version of exhortation. It's basically exhortation with a bite: command, censure, admonish. "Know those who labor among you, lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work." And then listen to this, "Live in peace with one another." How do I do that? "We urge you, brothers, admonish the unruly." See, it's not just pastors who are to admonish. It's all of you. "Admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Do we want peace in the body of Christ, living at peace with one another? You have a responsibility. Unity and harmony in the church of God? You have a responsibility. Paul urges the Thessalonian believers, "admonish the unruly." Someone who is unruly, disobedient, rebellious at heart, admonish them. Command

them, you can't do that. If they're stubborn, Oh, they're just kind of a stubborn kind of a person. No, no, no. There's no excuses for personality types.

All of our personalities and dispositions are warped by the sin nature, every single personality and disposition. Yes, we're all different. We all have different personalities and dispositions. But you know what those personalities and dispositions need? Exhortation, so we can be the person that God has designed us to be in Christ, not to maintain the comfort we have of being hard, stubborn sinners. Admonish the unruly.

But when you see someone who's faint-hearted, just fearful, acknowledge that, but encourage them. Come alongside and encourage them. Exhort them, urge them along, plead with them. If they're not rebellious but just truly faint-hearted, they'll come along. They just need an arm around the shoulder. You help them. Help the weak, weak of conscience, weak of discipline, weak in self-control, help them. All kinds of ways we help people who are weak. It's kind of what we have a discipleship and counseling ministry for, exactly for this purpose.

And then be patient with everyone. You need patience. I need patience. We're all growing, we're all changing, takes time. The writer to the Hebrews says likewise, Hebrews 10:24,



"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some," and the habit of some professing Christians, right? "But encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Again, the word translated, encouraging, is *parakaleo*. So it's exhorting one another as you see the day drawing near. Exhortation is to be an every-member ministry.

The word translated, stimulate, let us, you know, let's "consider how to stimulate one another, stimulate one another to love and good deeds," very interesting word, *paroxysmos*, a sense of stirring up encouragement. Also, a negative sense of provoking or even irritating. So provoke and irritate one another, as long as it's in the promotion of love and good works, patient with all people, we're good. Some of you are naturally irritating. I'll encourage you to conduct your ministry not in irritation but in meekness. And for the rest of you, you're welcome for that. I don't want to unleash a bunch of irritating people to come rummage through your life.

But in the opening line of that, notice, the writer does not say, let us consider whether to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, as if, as if it's an option, but rather "Let us consider how to stimulate one another." Let us consider

how to stimulate one another. How would we do that? In that consideration, how might we consider, hmm, whose job is it to, to provoke, and to encourage, and to exhort, and to admonish? Whose job, whose kind of role is to do that in the church, kind of as a job description? It's the pastor's, right?

So when you're considering how to stimulate one another, maybe look at the life of your pastor, maybe get an appointment with one of them and say, hey, listen, I've got this friend," remain unnamed, but I got this friend I want to provoke to love and good works because he or she is kind of lagging behind a little bit. I want to help them. How do you do it? How do you get into that conversation? How do I do that by kind of considering whether they're unruly or faint-hearted or weak? How do I be patient with them? How do I teach this?

I can tell you without fear of contradiction that every single elder and every mature member in this church would love to have that conversation. When is the last time you considered how to do that for yourself, for your own life? Do you reflect on your Christian duty to your brother and sister to exhort them and urge them and encourage them, even provoke or irritate them to love and good works?

Because it's a vital aspect of caring for one another, of truly loving one another: to love God and to love one another by exhorting each other. So in serving the role of exhortation in the administration of the pastoral office, we've seen, A, that it is a thing, that it is part of the calling. We've seen, B, why exhortation is necessary. Now, C, let's consider what exhortation encompasses as we're kind of wrapping up here.

Let's talk about the scope of exhortation. What's included? What's within the scope of pastoral exhortation, and what is off-limits? In Paul's letter to Titus, as in several of his epistles, it's clear how broadly he casts the net, how wide the scope of exhortation is, because proper to sound doctrine is the following. Paul told Titus to address a range of ages, older men and older women, younger women and younger men. Paul told Titus to speak about the workplace, relations between slaves and masters, speak about submission to various authorities, to be obedient people.

If we throw in Paul's letter to churches, Ephesians, Colossians in particular, we see in Peter's first epistle as well, they instruct and exhort about a broad range of issues: public life and private life, family, neighborly, home, work. They address rich and poor, slave and free, male and female,

those in authority, those under authority. Nothing is off limits, evidently, to the Apostle Paul. Can you imagine anyone in the Ephesian church, anyone in the Colossian church saying to Paul, whoa, Paul, whoa, whoa, whoa! You've gone way too far, here. You have stepped way outside the boundaries of your role. Telling me how to parent my kids? Getting in the middle of my marriage? Telling me how to run my family? Who exactly do you think you are?

But that is exactly what people of our time are saying to people in authority. That's exactly what they're saying to people in pastoral authority quite often. Oh, they're fine with the ministry of instruction. They're good with pulpit sermons. They're good with having their intellect stimulated, good with, with something that provides some diverting religious entertainment. But move from instruction to exhortation, and now the pastor has crossed a line, going from preachin' to meddlin'. People of our time resent and reject any perceived intrusion into the so-called private spaces of their life.

This is the same sentiment of the abortionists, isn't it? Keep your laws away from my body. But what does God say? You're to glorify God with your body. You're to "use the instruments of your body as instruments of righteousness, not of wickedness."

Oh, he gets all over and into your body in his Word all the time. This is exactly what the sexually immoral and the LGBTQ of our time say: Keep your laws out of my bedroom. But what does God say? "The marriage bed is to be kept undefiled," and "anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery in his heart. And adultery is what I forbid." Even in many churches, the cry is increasingly, Keep your ministry out of my family. Family is sacrosanct. The family is untouchable. If they're in my family, you can't speak to it. If it's how we do life and family, get away.

Well, listen, beloved, Shepherds, pastors, elders, overseers, along with evangelists and teachers, joined to the ministry as they are of the Apostles and the prophets, then our job is to exposit the text. It's to go where the text goes and say what the text says. It's to address what the text addresses. If we do not exhort in like manner, we're unfaithful to God, and we're man fearers, and there's a curse on our head. Since pastors and shepherds are God's appointed ministers to the spiritual matters of life, and since all of life is spiritual, you know what? Nothing is off limits.

We speak to whatever the Bible speaks to. We counsel according to the wisdom of the Bible, the wisdom of the

precepts, and the principles of Scripture. That doesn't mean we go rummaging through your closets, doesn't mean we're, have any interest. I mean, look, I'm busy enough. I have no interest in that stuff. But when something is raised to my attention, in the fear of the Lord I must deal with it. I must speak to it. If I see something and I let it go, I'm like the watchman on the wall who lets the enemy come in, and the blood of my people is on my head.

I've been called to this. I've been ordained to it. Are you going to be a faithful watchman on the wall as those who are chosen, called, gifted, prepared, qualified by Christ, given to the gifts, as, as gifts of Christ to the body, pastors, elders, shepherds, overseers? Listen, beloved, we're blessings to the church, not threats. You know what's a threat to the church? Undealt-with sin. Don't flip it around. Don't be tempted to flip it around.

We're blessings to the church for its salvation and sanctification. We're blessings to the church for its growth and godliness, for its strength and its maturity, for its joy and its gratitude. And that's why the writer says, "By the Spirit," in Hebrews 13:17, "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an

account.” That's the accountability. “But let them do this with all joy, not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.” Do not treat your shepherds as a threat. Treat them as a gift of God and a blessing, knowing that they are accountable, and they will give an account to God.

And they're accountable before the congregation as well. If their ministry starts to run afoul, they're confronted like anybody else is. But just know this, beloved, instruction is not the end of the pastor's duty, but only the beginning. Essential as it is, instruction is not the highest achievement in the pastorals, pastor's ministry. It's the first and most basic achievement, for without instruction, no one learns Scripture, no one learns its doctrines.

But exhortation follows instruction as surely as digestion follows chewing, and swallowing, and ingesting, good food. Exhortation takes the truth down into the heart, calls for a verdict, confronts the will, exposes the affections, so that we apply what we learn, so that we keep all that Jesus has taught us. Exhortation addresses the chain of virtues we saw earlier, root and branch, fearing the Lord, loving the law of God and the God of the law, obeying God, submitting to his authority and his

designated, delegated authorities, and seeking God's blessing, and worship, and service.

It's instruction that informs the intellect, but it's exhortation that addresses the will, and it compels the will through encouragement and command. In addressing the will, exhortation exposes the affections that reveals what we truly love and what we do not love. It, it, it exposes any lingering idolatry, any dark corners of the heart where there's a little idol set up that needs to be thrown down, demolished, smashed and, and, and dispersed into the wind.

Exhortation is key to the Great Commission. Sinners are saved and sanctified by the divinely appointed means of instruction and exhortation. And it's by exhortation that shepherds shepherd the flock of God. We can also add this, Christians are to follow their pastor's example in exhortation as they love and edify one another to the building up of the body of Christ, to the glory of God in Christ, amen?

That's what you get to do. And so when someone comes to you and encourages you toward obedience, urges you not to do that or say that, but to do it this way and say it that way, who even confronts or admonishes or corrects, develop a heart of the wise, because the wise man loves to be rebuked and corrected, so



that he'll be wiser still. Immerse yourself in the Proverbs, and you'll see it's the fool who closes his heart to exhortation, and admonition, and correction, and instruction. It's the wise who opens their heart to it, receives it, and then repents and obeys. Let's pray.

Our Father, we love you so much because you have sent people into our lives to exhort us in the truth, to confront us in our sin, and to point it out, and to tell us where we have run afoul of your law and your commands. Seeing ourselves for the first time by your grace and by the work of your Holy Spirit, we were awakened to our sinful condition because of instruction and, and exhortation.

Our wills were confronted, and we realized that we held on to unrighteous and ungodly affections. We loved idols, we loved sin, we loved unrighteousness, but you were so gracious not to leave us in that condition, but you called us out of it. You commanded us out of it. You called us to repent and believe the Gospel, to put our faith in Jesus Christ, to forsake our sins and forsake our sinful ways, and instead to follow Jesus Christ, the most majestic and glorious Savior and the mighty one who affected all, our eternal salvation, who pleased you in every way.

He's our King and our Savior and our Lord and our friend. But Father, we would not see him so if you didn't make us able to see, able to hear this good news, give us a heart to respond to the truth and obey it. So, Father, just as we were called and then saved through the ministry of instruction and exhortation leading to our baptism and our immersion in the Spirit by the Spirit into Christ, adjoining into the universal body of Christ, the Church; in the same way, would you be pleased to continue giving us instruction because it's a blessing and it's a privilege. It's not, it's, it's a gift of your grace. It's a privilege.

But along with the privilege of instruction is the privilege of exhortation. Help us to be those who receive it and also give it in a heart of love for you and a heart of love for people. Would you be pleased to save and sanctify many through our witness, our testimony, that we would be salt and light in this world, in this way, according to your truth in Jesus' name. Amen.