Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – June 17, 2018

A Local Church. . .

God’s design of it

Jesus’ words to it

My place in it

Shepherds and Sheep: A church is Christ’s Flock

You have a Great Shepherd, under-shepherds, and an enemy.

1 Peter 5:1-11

We’ve seen that a local church is the Body of Christ, a unity forged from diversity. The Bible also calls God’s people His flock, an image going back to Israel, David, the Twenty-third Psalm, and the latter prophets (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:22-24). Jesus commanded Peter, “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-19), and Peter here is passing that leadership baton to future generations of leaders. But how does this work? How are church leaders supposed to lead, and how should the flock respond? Peter answers those questions in a context of the battle for our souls.

Shepherds: Lead firmly but gently by example. vv. 1-4

✔Elders are both “among” and “over” an assembly, reflecting both responsibility and accountability. The context for this instruction is teaching on suffering in the present and judgment / reward to come (1 Peter 4:12-19). Acts 20:28

✔ Elders are to serve eagerly in joy, not mere duty, neither for profit or power.

✔ Elders are under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd, and must be mindful both of their temporary charge and their eternal reward.

Flock: Walk humbly but be battle-ready. vv. 5-11

✔ A flock requires leadership. We are not sheep, but still need shepherding.

✔ A flock’s next-gen learns and readies itself for responsibility and leadership.

✔ A flock is not to be anxious, but watchful. Our enemy is Satan, not one another.

✔ A flock should expect suffering, bear it patiently, awaiting Christ’s reward.

Applying the Principles to Church Membership

**1. If God has placed certain shepherds or overseers in the church, it is clear that He must also have certain persons in mind for them to lead.** It is impossible to have true leaders (named, recognized, and affirmed) without the persons led agreeing to follow them. Ephesians 4:11, 12; Hebrews 13:17.

**2. New Testament leaders must never presume that certain persons (or, everyone around them) desire their leadership.** Peter is restating Jesus’ principle that we must never “lord it over” anyone by force, manipulation, or presumption. Matt. 20:25-28.

**3. While we owe all believers love and good will, we do not have the same relationship with all believers with regard to leadership.** While the elders of an assembly are called to love everyone, they are not commanded to oversee everyone. For oversight to take place, it is necessary to have the approval, knowledge, submission, and consent of those in the overseer’s local church.

**4. Likewise, in the New Testament, believers are told that they owe certain things to their leaders:** To submit to them (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:5); to follow them (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Cor. 14:7; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3); to pray for them (Ephesians 6:18-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2; Acts 12:5); to respect them (1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17); to support them spiritually (2 Timothy 1:16-18; 4:16); in certain cases, to support them financially (1 Timothy 5:17, 18; Galatians 6:6, 7; 1 Cor. 9:7-14); and to gather at their request. Acts 14:27.

**5. It is clear that all believers do NOT owe these things to ALL leaders.** That would be impossible. But it is possible for persons in one local church to be responsible to their leaders, and for those leaders to be accountable for and to them.

**6. Church membership I s the key public expression of those relationships.** It is an acknowledgment by both leaders and congregation that there is an organic unity among a specific body of believers. It does not create the relationship, but defines and clarifies it. Church membership does not save us, but it shows we recognize that Jesus draws us to Himself as part of His Body, His Flock, and His Family, not as disconnected individuals.