

## The Bishop's Corner

### *Feed the Flock of God*

Praise the Lord Saints,

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (I Peter 5:1-10 KJV).”

Peter tells the pastors to feed the flock of God and not war among themselves (I Peter 5). Pastors must feed God's flock because the flock will die if the sheep are not being fed—malnourished sheep cannot produce more sheep. Feeding the flock means that whenever we come to church, there is always an opportunity for people to be saved. Feeding the flock also means that we give people the Word of God. After people have warred all week in the world, when they come to church, they need to hear about God who will give them peace. For this reason, Peter warns the pastors about warring among themselves; the sheep won't be fed if those who are spiritual are focusing on themselves and refusing to unify among themselves. Remember that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble, so we should always respect one another and never get to the point where we can't apologize to one another. Furthermore, if we can't put ourselves aside to get others saved and restored, then we're not very spiritual after all.

Jesus taught the disciples to love one another as God loves us. People are drawn to churches where there is unity and where they can be loved and get along with other people in the church; people don't like to be treated meanly. When people come to our churches, we are supposed to have empathy and understand what they are going through. Consequently, in our effort to get people saved, remember that we can't force people to be saved. They must decide to be saved according to their own free will; anything else is not a suitable sacrifice to God. Apostle Paul tells us that the kingdom of God is, “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17 KJV).” Therefore, all else is not that important. Paul goes on to say, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another (Romans 14:19 KJV).” We can't tolerate sin, but we can tolerate everything else. God's only concern is that people get saved and stay saved until Jesus comes.

The major premise of the gospel is forgiveness. Are we as obedient in forgiving others as we are in speaking in tongues? When we forgive, the debt is paid, and we don't bring up the sins of others any longer. We should forgive because that's what Jesus Christ does—He forgave us too. When we don't forgive, Satan takes advantage of us. After we have learned how to endure and forgive people, God will settle and strengthen us: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you (I Peter 5:10 KJV).” Once we who already believe are settled and strengthened, we are able to effectively minister Jesus Christ to those who will come into our churches. Feed the flock; let them know that there's hope in Him.

God bless you,

Bishop Charles D. Smith  
Gulf Coast Jurisdiction

