

FULFILLED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD
"Part XI: Mastering Today's Church Administrative Challenges"
(1 Peter 5:1-11)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) At last year's Promise Keepers Convention, a speaker claimed that the least gratifying job in America is the pastorate! Hearing this, Sean Coughlin returned from the convention to ask how I was doing!

(2) After hearing Todd's statement last Sunday that we as a Church "are broke," someone asked me what would happen if the church could not pay me **at all!** I responded, "Well, Scripture commands me to care for my family, so I would follow God's lead even if it meant moving!"

He didn't relish that idea, and asked if any private parties had promised me to underwrite my salary in case the body couldn't come through. I admitted that I had been so promised, but that I did not feel I could accept this from **individuals** as I work for the **Church!** This further troubled him! But I told him that Nadine and I don't worry about it -- we have lived this way for 19 years!

Nationwide! John E. Johnson quotes from an article by Edward T. Oakes on the problem in the current issue of Dallas Seminary's scholarly journal, Bibliotheca Sacra as follows: "If a pastor seeks to pursue a genuinely God-centered ministry (today), it will . . . 'collide head-on with the self-absorption and anthropocentric focus that has become common place in many evangelical churches." He also quotes Neuhaus: "'The minister is expected to be preacher, leader of worship, counselor, teacher, scholar, helper of the needy, social critic . . . and a host of other sometimes impossible things . . . Pastors harassed by these conflicting expectations . . . are tempted to embark upon . . . (a) game of tradeoffs . . . For the conscientious, who . . . keep the game going, it is a certain formula for . . . collapse.'" **When I told this input to Duane Doot last Wednesday, a Board member who knows better than most what has gone on over the years, he asked me, "How do you handle these things?!"**

Leaders! (a) One family I know moved to another town to avoid being hounded by their **evangelical** church leaders for dropping their attendance! (b) A former seminary classmate of mine now serves a life sentence in the Texas State Pen.! He assaulted a woman while pastoring in Dallas!

What's going on in church administrations to produce such problems today?! Why?! What can we do to help?!"

Need: "The Promise Keeper's meeting revealed that the pastorate is the least gratifying job in America today! I've seen administrative problems over the years even at Nepaug, and it worries me! From God's perspective, what's going on?! Why, and how may I help?!"

- I. **The ROOT source of administrative problems in today's local church is the angelic conflict, 1 Peter 5:1 with 4:7, 12-13:**
 - A. Peter addressed the elders of local churches (5:1, 2a) with an **emphasis on sharing Christ's "suffering" and "glory"**, 1 Peter 5:1.
 - B. This **emphasis** refers back to 1 Peter 4:12-13 where believers suffer from sudden persecution in the Christian experience!
 - C. In turn, **that persecution** comes through the angelic conflict which exists throughout the Church's latter days, 1 Pet. 4:7a:
 1. As we learned last week, Peter's reference to "the end" in 1 Peter 4:7a speaks of Christ's return, B.K.C., N.T., p. 853.
 2. His urging there to be "clear minded" in order to "pray" in Scripture often encourages people to prepare for Satanic attack, cf. Mtt. 26:41 with Lk. 22:31-32; Eph. 6:11-17, 18!
 - D. Thus, church administration problems **today** are fueled by Satan!
- II. **Since the angelic conflict lurks beneath TODAY'S church administrations, Peter addresses those needs as follows (5:2-11):**
 - A. Church **leaders** have a personal spiritual war to win, 5:2a-4:
 1. Leaders must **battle Satan's** lure to be **lax** in teaching Scripture (4:11a and "shepherd") and **lax** in shielding the flock from false teachers (Acts 20:28-29 and "oversight"), 5:2a, b.
 2. Leaders **today** must **fight** these battles **on these fronts**, 5:2c-3.
 - a. Leaders must ignore the lure to quit over hard ministry experiences that are plotted by Satan and gladly serve, 5:2c.
 - b. They (esp. pastors) must handle Satan's efforts to reduce the flock's giving (in order to lure them to fleece people for more income) by eagerly (*prothumos*, M.&M., A Vocab. of the Gr. N.T., p. 540) serving **in spite of** the offering levels, 2d!
 - c. They must resist the bait to use force when Satan gets the flock to be insubordinate and lead by example, 3; Ez. 34:4.
 3. They should seek the motivation to do these things **not** from earthly sources (like compliments from pleased people), but by focusing on eternal rewards from **Christ**, 5:4!
 - B. **Subordinates** have a personal spiritual war to win: they must submit and not heed Satan's lure to rebel against leaders, 5!
 - C. We may ask, "What if the **other** party (leader or subordinate) fails in **his** role?!" Peter answers this concern in 1 Peter 5:5b-9:
 1. Step One - Both church leaders and subordinates must do as Christ did in John 13:1-14 and adopt a servant's heart which diffuses eruptions in relations caused by pride:

- a. The KJV's "be subject one to another" better reads: "put on a slave apron of lowliness," Ab.-Sm., A Man, Gr. Lex., p. 128, 439. Peter thought of Christ's washing his disciple's feet after Judas rebelliously left the Upper Room to betray him, Jn. 13:2-4
 - b. Such humility counters revenge so that God in turn can intervene effectively to correct the injustices, 5:5b-6!
2. Step Two - Both leaders and subordinates must do this in faith or fall for Satan's ploy of destructive self-help efforts, 7-9a.
 3. Step Three - Leaders and subordinates must see the administrative battle as part of a war in the Church universal, and this encourages them to use faith as others must do, 5:9b.
- D. We **THEN** may ask, "But will such 'faith only' action let the wrongful party keep hurting others in the body?!" Peter answers us in 5:10-11:
1. Step One - God asks us to wait for him to handle the sinner, letting the afflicted suffer a while (holigos, Ibid., p. 315), 10a!
 2. Step Two - **Afterward**, God repairs (katartidzo, Ibid., p. 238) emotional and mental hurts suffered during that time period, 5:10b!
 3. Step Three - The oppressed party must trust God to confirm (stayridzei, Ibid., p. 418) his honor or role before others that has been damaged from the wrongs done by the sinning party, 5:10b!
 4. Step Four - The wronged one must trust God to strengthen (sthenosei, Ibid., p. 405) him from what mental and emotional weaknesses he has from being mistreated, 1 Peter 5:10c!
 5. Step Five - God then rebuilds (themeliosei, "lay a foundation," Ibid., p. 205) his ministry and relationships, 1 Peter 5:10d!

Application: *Overcoming in church administrative problems today starts by one's (1) believing on Christ for salvation from sin to be saved out of Satan's domination & delivered unto Christ's jurisdiction, John 3:16 with Col. 1:13. (2) Then we battle by (a) confessing any breaches of 1 Peter 5:1-11 in our lives (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) rely upon God's Spirit to counter satanic lures itemized throughout 1 Peter 5:1-11!*

Lesson: *Church administration transcends what we can see, for the job is spiritual: we must seek God if we would excel in it!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the solution . . .)

In the eighteenth century, a young man named John Fawcett took the pastorate of a small Baptist church in Wainsgate in northern England. He established a home with his new bride and ministered faithfully to the needs of the Baptist community there.

As the couple was soon blessed by a growing family, the material needs of the family grew, and it seemed that a move to a larger church would benefit the family. After submitting his application to several churches, John Fawcett was overwhelmed to receive a call from the large Carter's Lane Baptist Church in London to succeed the well-known Dr. Gill.

In the weeks before his departure, John continued to serve the small congregation as he had for the past six years. "Daily, the townspeople streamed to his cottage to offer their thanks, relay their sorrow at his impending departure, and seek some last bits of wisdom from the 32 year old pastor they had come to love so dearly."

But as Pastor John Fawcett loaded the wagon and looked around at the tear-stained faces of his friends, he suddenly made a life-long decision. "He jumped down from the wagon seat, went back inside the house, and gave the order to unload his household goods." He would stay at the small Baptist Church in Wainsgate, England!

The following Sunday, he preached from Luke 12:15 against the sin of **covetousness**! At the close of the sermon, Pastor John Fawcett read a poem he had composed for the occasion which follows:

"Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love;

The fellowship of kindred minds I like to that above..."

In the years that followed, John Fawcett's salary never exceeded \$200 per year! He wrote extensively and became well known for his scholarship.

But he is best remembered "for the **example** he set in his willingness to **sacrifice ambition** and **personal gain** for Christian **devotion to the fellow pilgrims of his home church.**" (Hymns of Faith & Inspiration, p. 128-129)

This is the way we overcome administrative problems in today's church -- by viewing them from God's perspective, and acting accordingly to the glory of Christ!