

Godly Authority New Covenant People #3

1 Peter 5:1-11

Review: Jesus's desire has always been to make us one, like God is one, so we SEE like Him.

Slide: Saved, Empowered, Entrusted
What does our 'oneness' accomplish for God in this world?

That the world may know *God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son into the world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus did not come to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him* (Jn 3:16-17).

Why do the people perish?

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom 6:23).

Who is saved?

All who believe in the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (Jn 17:3).

Just before Jesus ascended to rule in heaven, He made a bold statement to the remaining eleven disciples. *All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me* (Matt 28:18). Even though they had seen the miracles, been with Him after rising from the dead...they needed to be reminded of His authority.

Do we believe that Jesus has been given all authority?

What did He do with that authority? He commissioned the eleven to continue His work – as you continue living in this world, be making disciples everywhere: baptize them and teach them to obey my commandments. People have a way of excusing themselves at this point. Oh, that's just for the 11. You'd have to be reading the Bible rather strangely...especially when you keep reading on into Acts, not to see that this amazing mission gets passed on and on – all the way to us. Here's my point.

Jesus uses His authority for people to carry on His work.

Jesus said to the Father, *"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world"* (Jn 17:18). As we move through the story of the church, we find the first gathering of the disciples as a church (about 120) sought the Lord by prayer to choose a replacement for Judas...Matthias (Acts 1:12ff). And here the twelve are addressed as Apostles. And it's a good thing they added another because shortly after that, the Lord added 3000 people to the church...without the written New Testament. By the Spirit's help in them, the 12 were living NTs. The

church gathered around day after day to learn, worship and serve one another. After the 12 Apostles, the Lord added one more. Jesus chose a very zealous lawkeeper of the Jews. His misguided loyalty for God and the law made him an enemy of Jesus. Saul was a most effective destroyer of the church. Yet Jesus saw something in Saul, that the believers could not see. Jesus found in Saul an intelligence and grit that would be needed to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. You think some believers were freaked out? Of course...but God's servants worked hard to help Paul be accepted. I think it should be that way today. We don't get to pick and choose who God saves. But we disciple and work hard toward acceptance. I've found...Christ refines me and gives joy from helping people grow, that I would never have picked by preference. I grow, they grow, God is glorified...and oneness grows. Saul became Paul the apostle – uniquely taught by Christ (Gal 1:11-12) to plant churches in several Gentile nations to show the new covenant people...are all peoples saved through Christ (always been the plan Gen 12:1-3).

The 13 apostles completed the foundation for the church of Christ. We have the OT and NT. You'd think that alone, would be enough to keep us following Jesus together as God's

family. Mostly, but not all. We have enemies and we are still weak humans. So we might think that the last thing God gave His people to help reflect His oneness in truth and love...would be gifts the Holy Spirit gives to His people. These special gifts of service, mercy, administration...build up the body of Christ and demonstrate how we work together for God's glory. And yet we know from the church in Corinth, gifts are not enough. Love is the supreme way to experience our oneness. We might think the last thing God gave to unite us to God's will was the Apostles, Prophets, the evangelists and the pastors/teachers (Eph 4:11-16, 1 Cor 12:28). Partly, but not all.

Last week, I left you with a question. Who serves as Jesus' servants to oversee things like sound doctrine, discipline and direction in the local church?

In His word, God doesn't micro-manage how churches are organized. Leaves room for fitting different contexts. Instead, He teaches a spiritual leadership structure. I find it helpful that God gives us two different church scenarios to examine. And for both, the instructions are to set up a spiritual leadership team.

1. Paul received word about a church in Ephesus struggling with false

teaching (1 Tim 1:3-7, 20, 4:1-5,7) and proper conduct (2:11-15; 5; 6). Paul (house arrest in Rome) tells his representative Timothy, to make sure they have good overseers and deacons in place.

2. The situation in Crete was discouraging. The church was unorganized and its members were quite careless in behavior. They were being influenced by a culture where men were lax and careless; the young men lack self-control; older women gossips and drinkers; younger women idle and flirtatious (Titus 2). So this is an Island where there's very little fruit. This maligns God's word. What's Paul's instructions to his other emissary, Titus? Appoint elder teams (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5 and [James 5:14](#)) in every town (Titus 1:5). For those who haven't read Paul's letter to Titus, it's a good summary of the doctrinal teaching of the church as it grows from pioneer to established (institutional).

Several times in the NT 'overseers' (Episcopos) are mentioned (Acts 20, Phil 1, 1 Tim 3) to emphasize what these men do. Several times 'elders' (Presbuteros) are mentioned (Acts 11, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, Ja 5) to emphasize who these men are. Also Poimen – shepherd (Acts 20) and Oikonomon – steward (Titus 1, 1 Pet 5). Not all godly men must be elders (Paul wasn't one).

And elders are not always preachers. But one thing is clear, having a team of men to oversee the spiritual health, direction and management of the church family is important to God and a noble task (1 Tim 3). It's not something a person does, just because they must but because they are willing when appointed (1 Pet 5:2). "Here I am, Lord." When you examine the character qualifications of an elder/overseer, you may quickly realize it's the same qualities we would hope to find in most godly men. I have a handout at the back for those interested in this list.

So in addition to the Word, Spirit, gifts, pastor/teachers...God has churches carry out His work...served by a team of undershepherds. Not appointed according to their lineage or what bible school they attended (old system) but appointed for their understanding God's word and their character - at home, church and work. And there's different ways a team of men can go about this. Like setting up a regular meeting schedule and being 'on call' for when issues or people need help. Putting together a statement of faith (1-2 page summary of key scripture teachings), Key values, a standard of conduct. A way to help people increase their faith and community through service opportunities. A way to increase commitment to one

another and the direction of the church through membership. Elders are undershepherds of Christ's flock.

Many churches in Canada have compromised God's word because they don't want to confront the cultural pressure. But the truth is, God has giving men and women different roles. So they avoid teaching from those parts of NT Scripture. Some might use the term deacons (servers) to avoid the issue of male church leadership...because there are women servers in the NT. Associated Gospel Churches strive not let the voice of culture drive our interpretation of Scripture in this area. Cultural insight may challenge us to evaluate our historic interpretations but never compromise God's revealed will. It's a key reason I am here. If I could pinpoint one reason my previous church imploded after a growth spurt...would be the refusal of a few key people, to submit to the authority model God prescribes. Some good seeds were planted so I hope they get another chance in 5 years.

Instead of going on more about authority structures...God's and mans. Or about our suspicion of all authority – and how that's the devil's trick. Or about how our culture has been systematically brainwashing people to be suspicious and rebellious. I'd like to

just find way to bring us together under God's authority. I'm going to ask our Elder Team to come up here to introduce them and ask a few simple questions.

I'm here because of God's work in them. And now we are learning what it takes to be a team under Christ.

Bob – What is the purpose of Lillooet Gospel Chapel?

Richard – What is your role as a member of the Elder board?

Anything else you guys would care to add?

Chris – What does it mean to you, when someone joins as a member? Or what does membership mean to you?

Exhortation to Spiritual Leaders

Prayer and Whole Church

READ 1 Peter 5:1-11

Pray for the Elder team and support them so that their work will be a joy.

Hebrews 13:17