

# Lesson 4 – Realm & Limitations of the Bishops' Authority

## **TODAY'S TEXT**

*“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”*  
**1 Peter 5:1-4**

THINK  
CAREFULLY...

*Is an appointment to the eldership a lifetime position?*

## **Understanding the Authority of the Bishops**

- ❖ **A bishop's authority comes from God.**
  - Authority is not derived from himself, nor from the preacher, nor from the congregation, but from the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).
  - Eph. 1:21-23; Matt. 28:18; John 19:10-11; Heb. 13:17
- ❖ **A bishop must serve with other bishops.**
  - Always a plurality of bishops in a local church
  - Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:6; 20:17,28; 21:18; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14
  - A plurality of elders prevents one man from having preeminence (Remember Diotrephes? 3 John 9-11).
- ❖ **A bishop's oversight is limited to the congregation where he works and worships.**
  - Acts 11:27-30; 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5
  - 1 Pet. 5:1-2 – “The elders who are among you”
  - The bishops oversee the congregation in matters of Divine Law (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:32; 1 Tim. 5:17).
    - They do not create law, nor can they change it, they enforce it (James 4:12).
  - The bishops oversee the congregation in matters of human judgment (Heb. 13:17).
- ❖ **A bishop is a leader, not a lord.**
  - Consider the “whole church” (Acts 15:22).
  - True wisdom is open to reason (James 5:13-18).
  - “nor as being lords over those entrusted to you” (1 Pet. 5:3).
  - What was Rehoboam's failure (1 Kings 12:1-16)?
  - Paul had authority to command Philemon, but “without consent” he did nothing (Philemon 8-14).
- ❖ **A bishop is not above rebuke.**
  - He is not infallible (Rom. 3:23).
  - We must consider the “outcome of their faith” (Heb. 13:7).
  - They serve as examples (1 Pet. 5:3).
  - Elders who sin in the presence of many must “be rebuke” in the presence of the congregation (1 Tim. 5:17-25).