

1 John 2:27

Today I want to deal with a verse that has proved to be a problem for some: 1 John 2:27, *'But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, **and you do not need that anyone teach you;** but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.'*

As a result, some have taken umbrage with the idea that anyone should attempt to teach or spiritually feed God's people.

First, let's look at the word 'feed' throughout the whole Bible. In the Old Testament it is dominantly "raah", always translated "feed", as in 1 Samuel 17:15, *"David went to feed his father's sheep."* Now while this word is used of feeding physical sheep, it is also used of God's spiritual sheep, eg Ezekiel 34:15, *'I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD'*, speaking of Christ, and Jeremiah 3:15, *'And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall **feed** you with knowledge and understanding,'* which is quite specific and speaks of spiritual food, provided by God's pastors.

God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. In God's Kingdom, those who become the Bride of Christ will feed God's people, as we read in Ezekiel 34:23, *'And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd,'* and Jeremiah 23:4, *'And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.'*

There is no subtlety here, just the use of a positive action, the provision of "knowledge and understanding", from the word of God, and this is in the future, dealing with all physical people, including all nationalities!

In the New Testament we see two words translated "feed : bosko – to feed, pasture; and poimaino – to tend as a shepherd.

In John 21: 15,16,17, both words are used, providing more information. In verses 15 and 17 both lambs, (those new in the faith) and sheep, (more mature) are provided with food. In verse 16 the word may be better translated "tend", as applied to sheep. *'So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.'*

Vines "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words is most valuable in helping to clarify things. He writes, after describing the two words, on page 417, " In John 21:15,16,17, the Lord addressing Peter, first uses No 1 bosco, (verse 15) then No 2, poimaino (verse 16) and then returns to bosco (verse 17). These are not simply interchangeable; a study of the above notes will show this [the two different meanings]. Nor, again, is there a progression of ideas. **The lesson to be learnt, as Tench points out, (Syn. xxv) is that, in the spiritual care of God's children, the feeding of the flock from the word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place;** [my note – Christ here uses bosco twice, poimaino once] the

tending (which includes feeding) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals, but they are incidental in comparison with the feeding.”

I here quote Vines simply because he is THE acknowledged expert in the use of Greek words at the time of Christ.

Now, in the light of Jesus Christ’s words about feeding God’s sheep which we read in John 21, lets return to 1 John 2:27. I can understand that this verse, taken in isolation, could mislead you. *‘But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.’*

Some people have read 1 John 2:27 and it has brought them to believe that they need no human teachers now that they have been baptised and received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by other Christians.

It is human nature that prompts some to believe that they need no human teachers, but God’s word also warns us to stay close to the gospel we have received by preaching, including Christ’s words. Galatians 1:7-8. *‘Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’*

It is no coincidence that God gives us the example of the Ethiopian’s request in Acts 8:30-31, *‘And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, understandest thou what thou readest? and he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he should come up and sit with him’*

It is plainly true though that, once we have matured spiritually, and grown sufficiently in grace and knowledge, God’s Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, John 14:26, *‘But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,’* but we must remember that we are not to ignore all the other verses in God’s word which talk abundantly of the need to expound, preach and teach God’s word especially to those who are young in the faith. This is to be done so that we become aware of all scripture, not just a few verses taken out of the context of the whole Bible. As Jesus said in John 21:17, even mature sheep sometimes need teaching!

In that light let us examine 1 John 2:27. *‘But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.’* Here the apostle John actually writes **again** to Gentile congregations he has himself previously taught. 1 John 2:1,18. *‘My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’* 18, *‘Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.’* These were not unbaptised or new in the faith, and John is here encouraging them to hold on to the truth he had taught them from God’s word at the beginning of their walk with Christ, verse 24. *‘Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.’*

Mature Christians, led by God's Holy Spirit, should eventually come to the point where they can correctly draw their own conclusions from God's word.

In conclusion, we can nevertheless always learn from those more spiritually mature than ourselves which is why Christ commissioned the Apostles to teach all nations (Matthew 28:19), a commission now passed on to God's Church today, whose responsibility it is to expound "*the faith which was once delivered to the saints,*" as it tells us in Jude 3.

.....