

Message: **Shepherding According to the Will of God**

Text: 1 Peter 5:1-4

Introduction

A. Reasons for choosing to do a series of messages from 1 Peter at this time in the life of our church.

1. Two dominant themes in 1 Peter are suffering and the second coming of Christ.

1 Peter 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, **even though tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor **at the revelation of Jesus Christ**; ... 13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ**.

1 Peter 4:13 but to the degree that **you share the sufferings of Christ**, keep on rejoicing, so that also **at the revelation of His glory** you may rejoice with exultation.

2. The relationship of these two themes is apparent - God wants our faith, love, and hope in the returning Christ to carry us through our sufferings, keeping our hope firmly grounded in Christ.

1 Peter 5:12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, **exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!**

3. To be able to stand firm in the true grace of God, we need to ...

a. Understand that suffering is abnormally normal in this present age.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, **do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;**

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore, **those also who suffer according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

(1) Cf. Aubrey Neely's note on her Field Preparation Orientation training this summer - our sent ones are being taught that "suffering is normal."

(2) In 1999 we were not so demographically diverse in terms of age. I was 48 and 90% of our people were younger than I. Hospital visits were as much for babies as for illnesses. And while we've still had a baby boom and a lot of kids, our ages are now spread across the spectrum, with all the attendant physical illness and decline that accompanies aging.

(3) Our members in foreign nations are experiencing more repression and hostility.

(4) Even our own culture is becoming increasingly intolerant of some of our Christian values.

b. We need to prepare ourselves to suffer according to the will of God in imitation of Christ.

1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same purpose**, because **he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**,² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

(1) It is true, the suffering Peter is talking about is not the suffering we bring upon ourselves as a consequence of our sinning. Nor is it the suffering we experience due to God's curse upon creation due to sin. It is suffering for being a Christian, living like Christ.

1 Peter 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but **if anyone suffers as a Christian**, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

- (2) However, the same attitude and resolve to lose our lives for Christ's sake that enables us to persevere in faith through the sufferings of persecution is the same attitude and resolve necessary to persevere through sufferings of illness, loss of possessions, jobs, health, loved ones, life itself.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself**, and **take up his cross daily and follow Me**."²⁴ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake**, he is the one who will save it.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or **do you not know** that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **that you are not your own?** ²⁰ **For you have been bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body.

- c. In other words, without a "lose your life for Christ's sake" mentality, we will neither live well, nor suffer well, nor die well.

B. Reason for beginning our series in chapter 5:1-4.

1. Annual elder/deacon nominating process begins today, and this text underscores some necessary qualifications for our church leadership.
2. In 1 Peter 5:1-2a Christ's apostle uses 3 words to describe the role the one office of overseer/elder/pastor:
 - a. presbuteros - elder
 - b. poimaino (vb) - to shepherd; poiman (n) - shepherd, pastor (one who pastures the flock)
 - c. episkopeo (vb) - oversee; episkopos (n) - overseer (KJV: bishop)

1 Peter 5:1-2 Therefore, I exhort the **elders** (presbuteros) among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² **shepherd** (poimaino) the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** (episkopeo) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; ... 4 And when the **Chief Shepherd** (archipoinan) appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

3. This text, like others in 1 Peter, calls pastors to arm themselves with the same purpose as Christ - to suffer in the flesh, to deny themselves, lose their lives for Christ's sake.

C. What we will look at today is how a Spirit generated "lose your life for Christ's sake" attitude/faith will enable pastors to shepherd God's people into living by that same kind of faith in Christ. For, the character qualities required of pastors are not different than those required of deacons or different from what is commanded of all Christians. As Christ's apostle Paul wrote ...

Ephesians 4:11 And **He gave** some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and **some as pastors and teachers**, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ **until we all attain** to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ**.

D. Here are the following ways a "lose your life for Christ's sake" faith is to be manifested by pastors in specific, and by all of God's people in principle.

I. 5:1,2a Pay the cost of fulfilling the ministry to which you have been called.

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore, those also who **suffer according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

5:1 **Therefore**, I exhort the elders among you, as *your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ*, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² **shepherd the flock of God among you**,

- A. The “therefore” of 5:1 points back to 4:19. They are to entrust their souls to God in doing what is right - shepherd the flock of God among them according to the will of God, though it brings them suffering, just as they bear witness to Christ’s sufferings for doing the will of God.
- B. Pastors ordinarily become targets (as do leaders in general). It would be tempting to keep your life for yourself and not fulfill your ministry, either by quitting, or by “selective preaching and shepherding,” avoiding unpopular Scriptural truths and practices. E.g. ...

Colossians 4:17 Say to Archippus, **Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.**

2 Timothy 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, **suffer hardship**, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry**.⁶ For **I am already being poured out as a drink offering**, and the time of my departure has come.

Acts 20:20 ... **I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable**, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.²² "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me."²⁴ **But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus**, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

- C. No doubt Christ’s words to Peter were in the back of Peter’s mind as he wrote “shepherd the flock of God among you.” Fulfilling his Christ appointed ministry would cost Peter his life. Therefore, he begins 5:1 with “therefore,” linking the command of 5:2 to the suffering described in 4:19.

John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, **Feed My lambs.**¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, **Shepherd My sheep.**¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, **Feed My sheep.**¹⁸ "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go."¹⁹ **Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.** And when He had spoken this, He said to him, **Follow Me!**

II. Serve the local flock of God willingly as God should will, and not under compulsion.

1 Peter 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God**; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

III. Serve the local flock of God with eagerness, and not for personal advantage.

1 Peter 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; **and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness**;

- A. That is hard to do when we are tired, weary, hurting, extremely busy.
- B. It is also hard - impossible - when we live keeping our lives for ourselves instead of losing them for Christ’s sake. We’re disappointed, frustrated, angered when a desire of our heart is infringed upon by the call of Christ.

IV. Serve with humility, and not on a power trip.

1 Peter 5:3 **nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge**, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Luke 22:24-27 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.²⁵ And He said to them, **The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them**; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'²⁶ **But it is not this way with you**, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.²⁷ "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? **But I am among you as the one who serves.**

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,¹⁹ **serving the Lord with all humility** and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

V. Serve as an example to the flock among you.

1 Peter 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, **but proving to be examples to the flock.**

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, **show yourself an example of those who believe.**

- A. Shepherds must be able to teach by example as well as by word.
- B. If we have a “keep my life for myself” attitude, we won’t want to be put in that position, but will want the freedom to sin without being charged (so we think) with hypocrisy or failure.

VI. Serve for Christ’s heavenly reward, and not for earthly reward.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, **you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**

Romans 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**¹⁸ For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

Conclusion:

- A. Suffering in this age is normal. So ...

1 Peter 4:12 **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;**¹³ **but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.**

- B. Only with a “lose your life for Christ’s sake” attitude, will we live well, suffer well, die well.
- C. Pray that Christ would raise up and keep for us elders and deacons who live with such a mentality for the sake of Christ and His church, for which Christ gave up His life. Pray not only for church leaders, but that all of us would learn by God’s grace to lose ourselves for Christ’s sake.