

The Great Pastoral Duty – I Peter 5:1-4

I. Introduction:

- A. Here we are in the auditorium of the Calvary Baptist Church. Why are you here?
1. Is it to see your Christian friends? Do you come to sing the songs of Zion? Is it out of habit?
 2. Why are you here? Is it to worship the Lord? Is it to testify of your faith to the community?
 3. Is it because when it comes to prayer, it is better where two or three are gathered together?
 4. Along with rather poor answers, there may be several good ones.
 5. But obviously, some are better, and some are more Biblical than others.
- B. If we took a poll, it might be found that we all have different reasons for attending the Lord's church.
1. And just to be honest my purpose is different from yours. It **should** be different from yours.
 2. Probably, whatever your primary purpose might be, I would share that purpose with you.
 3. But I have responsibilities for being here which you have not been given.
 4. There is no dishonor in that, and I'm not trying to make anyone feel upset about it.
 5. But as the Lord's elder in this church, I am here under God's exhortation to feed you.
 6. You don't have that same responsibility, and if you did it might create some degree of chaos.
 - a. In the last 250 years there have been cults which professed not to have congregational leaders.
 - b. Anyone who felt the urge could get up to lead the singing or to preach a sermon.
 - c. And sometimes that lack of organization created problems.
 7. But the Lord's church has been described as a body with several parts, & not everyone can be the tongue.
- C. Some of you ladies go to great trouble planning and preparing meals for your family; serving tasty, nutritious foods, while mixing in a little variety from time to time.
1. I have a commission to do the same sort of thing, but my meals are to feed your souls, not your bodies.
 2. Tonight I'd like to consider Peter's exhortation to the pastors of the churches to which he was writing.
 3. So it is primarily instruction for me, but I'm hoping you will learn a little bit about the ministry in the process.
 4. Peter says, *"The elders which are among you, I exhort... feed the flock of God which is among you..."*
- D. Before getting to me, let's begin with what Peter says about you:

II. The FLOCK of God.

- A. Are you familiar with some of the nouns used to describe collections of animals? They can be a lot of fun.
1. For example, a group of **crows** can be called a *"murder."* It's true. Google it.
 - a. And a bunch of **ravens** might be called a *"senate,"* a *"conspiracy"* or a *"treachery."* How appropriate.
 - b. Many other animals have interesting collective nouns: a *"rafter of turkeys,"* a *"fluffle of rabbits,"* a *"mob of emus or kangaroos."*
 2. In our text, Peter uses the word *"flock"* without designating any particular kind of animal.
 3. But the word is associated with only of three groups of animals – small birds, or goats and sheep.
 4. It seems pretty clear to me that without saying so, Peter thinks of a church as a flock of small cattle.
 5. That is a reasonable assumption, because we find that term used off and on throughout the Bible.
 6. **Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel** speak of spiritual sheep and their shepherds, and so does the **Lord Jesus**.
 - a. **John 10** – *"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."*
 - b. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."*
 7. I like the image. I don't mind being one of the Lord's sheep, if He will be my shepherd.
 8. Sheep have very distinct attributes and habits, which I won't get into much tonight.
 9. I highly recommend Philip Keller's book on the Twenty-Third Psalm, as a study of the nature of sheep.
- B. Peter picks up where the Lord Jesus left off and calls us *"the flock of God."*
1. This gives us several things us to consider and especially for the elder of that church.
 2. First, this is not **that elder's** church or **his** people; it is **God's flock** and **Christ's church**.

3. And with the ownership of that flock, comes authority over the under-shepherd of that flock.
 4. If the pastor leads God's sheep into danger, it will not be the little lamb that the Lord holds responsible.
 5. And if the ewes of the flock are emaciated and starving, it is due to the pastor's poor leadership.
- C. Adding even more to the weight of that relationship, Peter describes the flock as *"God's heritage."*
1. The idea is that they have been especially chosen by God, & there is an ongoing future in that relationship.
 2. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, those making up His first church, *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"* – **Luke 12:32**.
 3. One day soon all the little flocks from around the world & from thousands of years, will be gathered together, & the chief Shepherd will be loved, served & adored by every member of that accumulated flock.
 4. And again, if among them there are some emaciated lambs or other sheep with bruises and wounds, the Lord is going to know that His under-shepherds have failed in their duties of leading and feeding.
- D. It took me six or eight readings of these verses before I saw it, but eventually I noticed the words *"among you."*
1. It probably isn't important, but at the very least it is just a bit interesting.
 2. In this letter to the saints, Peter says, *"The elders which are among you I exhort..."*
 3. And then to the elders he uses the same words but in reverse, *"Feed the flock of God which is among you."*
 4. It should remind those elders that, despite the special relationship they have to the flock, they aren't as special as some of them want to picture themselves.
 5. The shepherd walks among the sheep as part of Christ's flock himself.
 - a. I said a moment ago that I enjoy the idea that I am one of the Lord's lambs.
 - b. The truth is, I'd rather be a sheep with all of you than to be a sheep dog.
- E. And there is another thing about the flock to which I hope you concur.
1. I hope that you come to the House of God hungry, hoping and expecting to be fed.
 2. Living creatures and growing souls, need to be fed.
 3. And just as our bodies get hungry once in a while, something is wrong if our souls don't get hungry as well.
 4. You may come to the house of God for the fellowship, or to share your burdens, or your joy.
 - a. You may come to church to worship the Lord and to join in the singing of a few hymns.
 - b. These things are fine.
 5. But among those other reasons, I hope you come to be fed.

III. With these things in mind, what it is that Peter reveals about the PASTORS of those sheep?

- A. Right off the bat, we see that elders, themselves, must be open to exhortation and instruction.
1. *"The elders which are among you I exhort..."*
 2. The sheep are not the only members of the flock community in need be fed or who need to be encouraged in their duties.
 3. Even if the under-shepherd knows what work ought to be done, sometimes he needs a little push.
 4. And when he thinks that he knows all there is to know about sheep and pastures, wolves and storms, then perhaps that is when he needs to retire, because he doesn't know it all.
 5. The only time God's flock will have a perfect shepherd is when the Chief Shepherd shall appear.
 6. Pray for your pastor, and pray for all the flock-workers you know – missionaries, pastors, associates.
 - a. Pray that they will continue to learn and grow, feasting upon God's Word.
 - b. Pray that they will listen to the Lord and follow God's leadership through that pastor toward the next pasture. In one sense, the elder or bishop is as much one of the sheep as anyone else.
- B. By referring to feeding, Peter is essentially telling those elders to be pastors of the flock.
1. They are to feed the flock, but not in the sense of putting the bottle to their lips. They aren't nursemaids.
 2. They can lead their flock to water, but they can't make them drink.
 3. It is their task to set before the flock the grass they need, giving them the opportunity to feed.
 4. The sheep need to listen to their hearts, or stomachs, as well as listen to the Holy Spirit – *"Come and dine."*

- C. From what I have read, the literal sheep of this physical world are not the best or smartest of diners.
1. For example, they will chew the grass down to the dirt, before they move on to richer pastures.
 2. And they will eat plants which are not necessarily very healthy for them.
 3. They need to be moved from field to field, and they need to be lead to the best grass in that field, otherwise they will either eat noxious weeds or perhaps nothing at all.
 4. Sheep are like children, thinking that candy is the first major food group.
 5. Christians will eat all kinds of stuff.
 - a. They may feast on Hollywood movies or John Grisham novels – sometimes digestible snacks.
 - b. Or they may fill themselves with the poisons of heretical doctrine and human philosophy.
 6. When they come to the pasturage of the House of God, they deserve only the best grass – God’s Word.
- D. Peter says, *“feed the flock of God”* you elders.
1. The sheep are hungry and needy whether they know it or not.
 2. Give them meat and potatoes to go along with the sincere milk of the word.
- E. Both the shepherd and the sheep need to see that the elder is the overseer of the flock under Christ.
1. When Peter says, *“taking the oversight thereof”* he uses the same root word as the noun which is translated *“bishop.”*
 2. As I said in our last lesson, this elder is acting as a pastor while wearing the authority of a bishop.
 3. And yet he has no authority to lord over the flock the way that a dictator might.
 4. One of the clear distinctions between the pastor and the dictator is the kind of leadership he provides.
 5. The pastor should **lead** the flock rather than **drive** it.
 6. When he recognizes that it is time to change pastures, he should simply say, *“Come on flock, follow me, and let’s move over there.”*
 7. And again, it must still be about delivering the best food to the sheep.
- F. The overseeing bishop’s primary task is to feed the sheep.
1. And one of the tastiest condiments to the meal should be his example.
 2. **Paul** said to **Timothy**, *“These things (that I’ve just mentioned) command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, (and) in purity.”*
 3. And to young **Titus** he said essentially the same thing: *“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works...”*

IV. That brings us to Peter’s reference to the **CHIEF SHEPHERD**.

- A. My mind wants to go back to the Lord’s parables about the talents and the pounds which we looked at in earlier lessons.
1. Some of the elders which are among us have been given ten responsibilities, five responsibilities, or perhaps just one.
 2. The Master, the Chief Shepherd, has gone away into a far country, where He’s been for some time.
 3. But He is coming back.
 4. And when He returns He will reckon with each of His under-shepherds in areas which are beyond that of the rest of the flock.
 5. What has Christ’s servant done with the time, the talents, the blessings and the responsibilities he has received?
 6. Has he led the flock to nutritious green pastures? Has led them to the still waters of the promises of God?
- B. Christ is returning little flock; lift up your heads and watch the horizon.
1. He is coming to gather His flock to Himself.
 2. When He comes He will put down all the lions, bears and wolves, including the wolves in sheep’s clothing.
 3. He is coming again to be glorified **before** His flock and **by** His flock.

- C. And you, brother under-shepherd, *“when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*
1. There is no higher service in this world than to be an elder or bishop in one of the Lord’s flocks.
 2. I wish that I could convey to God’s young men, the joy, the thrill and the challenge that exists in serving the Lord as the pastor of one of Christ’s congregations.
 3. Yes, the responsibilities are great and God’s examination of those bishops will perhaps be difficult.
 4. And yes, there will be those situations and people – storms and wolves – who will test you until you can’t sleep.
 5. But the rewards for this kind of service are out of this world.
- D. When the Lord comes to reward His servants, there will be some variety in the honors He bestows.
1. There will be some sheep who are more highly rewarded than other sheep, because they have been more faithful in investing the Lord’s talents.
 2. And there will be rewards for Christ’s under-shepherds, which the sheep will not receive.
 3. In either case, we all should be excited about the Lord’s return.