

A Shepherd after God's Own Heart

1 Peter 5:1-4

Reading: Psalm 23

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Bethany Baptist Church

When I was in my mid-30's, a young couple visited our small church for a few of Sunday's.

- A. I was excited & hopeful. I knew Gary & Cindy from work. They seemed serious about their faith & their family. Surely this young family would be a great addition to our little congregation.
- B. And I was proud of our church.
- C. But after a few weeks, Gary told me one morning that they were going to keep looking. This was their concern: we were between pastors...
- D. If they couldn't know our shepherd, they couldn't be sure what would become of the flock.
- E. I learned a valuable lesson about leadership that Sunday: sheep want follow a shepherd they can trust & emulate.
- F. If the shepherd isn't right, the sheep will suffer.

Turn w/ to **1 Peter 4:12-5:4** (*focus on 5:1-4; but context of 4:12-19*).

- G. The elders of these suffering churches had to shepherd their flocks in a manner that served God's people & pleased their Chief Shepherd. It would be difficult, but here was Peter's familiar motivation: the promise of future glory.
- H. In times of trouble, the NT has clear directions for the church & her shepherds. From 1 Peter 5, I want us to explore...

Three important words to men who *lead the church* in the midst of *trying times*.

1. A motivating word of *appeal* (1)
2. A clarifying word of *contrast* (2-3)
3. A fortifying word *promise* (4)

Godly shepherds lead safe & healthy & prosperous flocks!

...pray...

1. **Peter's words had been plain (4:12-19): *suffering for your faith is a part of the believer's life* (read 4:12-13).**

Now the Apostle draws near to their *elders*, to *appeal* to them to in the presence of the congregations they serve.

A. *...the elders among you...*

- i. The NT church gives us three titles for the men who lead & equip God's people: *overseer* = , *shepherd (pastor)* = , & *elder*. Three titles, but one office (Acts 20; 1 Tim 3).
- ii. The NT office of elder seems influenced by the Jewish tradition of community elders, but is clearly defined in the NT. E.g. ...
 - a. Number: plural! Everywhere in the NT.
 - b. Qualifications: desire, character, home, abilities (teaching). 1 Tim 3; Titus 1
- iii. *...among you...* - With everyone listening to this letter from the beloved Apostle Peter himself, all eyes in the congregation must have been drawn to their elders' faces, as Peter focused on them with this brief appeal.

B. *Therefore, I exhort you...*NASB. *I exhort you...* But a better translation is probably, *I appeal to you...* And Peter's appeal is the arm around the shoulder, the voice of experience, the eye of faith that looks to the future.

- i. Men, *I appeal to you as your fellow elder*.
 - a. "Walk softly & carry a big stick!" Peter could have leaned on the *clout of his office* as apostle (they *all* knew that's what he was!), but he *didn't*.
 - b. With his *arm around his friends*, Peter appealed to *shared experience & shared responsibility*. The responsibilities they shared in *directing & caring for* God's people.

- ii. Men, *I appeal to you as ... an eyewitness of Christ's sufferings.*
 - a. Now we hear the Apostle's passionate *voice of experience*, something these elders *couldn't share & had to respect*: Peter had been with Jesus (in *Galilee*, in *Jerusalem*, in the *Garden*, in *Courtyard*). Peter was an eye-witness of the Savior's *sufferings*.
 - b. Peter's letter is filled with those *memories & their lessons*. The sufferings of Christ become *our example & our motivation* when we are allowed to suffer for Him.
 - c. And here, as Peter draws his letter towards its close, *suffering remains a big idea*; the *church* will suffer, its *leaders* will suffer, they must *shepherd the flock* well.
- iii. Men, *I appeal to you as ... a partaker also in glory we are all waiting for*. Peter loves to explore the relationship between *suffering now & glory later!* (**4:13, 14, 16**)
 - a. The glory that is yet to be revealed - but *will* come.
 - b. →The glorious return of Christ to *rescue & reward & judge*. Surely this has become so plain, when times are tough, Peter lived on hope: eschatological hope!

Difficult days will call for godly leadership! Peter appeals to these godly leaders to face the challenge.

2. How does a godly elder lead God's flock (vv. 2-3)?

A. To Shepherd; To exercise oversight.

1. The *main idea* of this short text (1-4) is *right here* (don't miss it): *elders (pastors)* are called to care for God's people. To *shepherd the flock of God*.
 - a. What does a shepherd do? Shepherds are expected to *lead, feed, clean, doctor, & protect*. He *searches, he gathers, he arbitrates, he admonishes*.
2. Then Peter turns right around (still v. 2) and uses a 2nd verb that *underlines & expands* the idea of *shepherding*: to *exercise oversight*; to attend to the *affairs* of God's people from a *position* of leadership (→ *authority*).

(Develop relationship of this to **Jer 3:15 & Eph 4:11&12**?)

3. But please don't miss this: *whose flock are we talking about? God's flock!* In fact, the term for **flock** here is *diminutive* (lit. *little flock*); it is a term that is *warm* with God's love for His people: Peter encourages these men to *shepherd God's beloved flock among whom they stand & serve*.

B. Then (vv. 2b&3) Peter summarizes how the shepherd exercises his oversight with a *triplet* of **contrasts**: *negatives* set against *positives*. Not *that way*, Peter warns, **but** *this way*...

1. *Not under compulsion* **but** *voluntarily*
 - a. No one should lead God's people because someone is forcing him against his will & desire.
 - b. *...but...* a shepherd should guide God's flock because that's the *responsibility & privilege* he wants. Paul writes in 1 Tim 3:1 – *If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do*.

- c. But the **NT** also recognizes sometimes it's *God* who compels our service, and that kind of *divine pressure* is ok! Here is how Paul put it (1 Cor 9:16): *I am **compelled** to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*
- d. Did you catch the *end* of this first contrast? The willing shepherd tends His flock *according to God*. The idea is probably that the pastor's motivation is informed by *God's example*.
...therefore, motivated to serve by...
 - i. Our **Lord**, who is the *Shepherd* who meets every need (Psa 23).
 - ii. **Jesus**, who is the *Good Shepherd* who knows His own (John 10).

2. Neither greedily **but** eagerly. (2nd Shepherding Contrast)

- a. *Preacher, I hope you're not in this for the money!*
That's Peter's point...
- b. And the admonition at the end of v. **2** can rightly be expanded to forbid *any motives* that use the ministry as a means of *self-advancement & self-promotion*.
- c. Here was God's condemnation of Israel's *self-seeking religious leaders* in the days of Ezekiel: *"Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat & clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep w/o feeding the flock."* (34:2b-3)
- d. Certainly the **NT** commands congregations to support their pastors with *love & an adequate paycheck*. Indeed, elders who work hard at *preaching & teaching* are commended as worthy of *double-honor* (\$).
- e. But the right motivation for the *elder (pastor)* is simply this: *w/ eagerness*. Eagerness motivated by **love** for *Christ & love* for Christ's *people*.

3. *Neither dominating but* as an *example* (3rd contrast; v. 3)

- a. You often read about various styles of leadership. Certainly, the personalities & giftedness of good leaders will *distinctly flavor* their service. But there are a few *non-negotiable* characteristics in the NT!
- b. Peter's 3rd *negative* is a *compound word* that emphasizes a *heavy handed, domineering* style of leadership. **Wrong!**
- c. **But...** live for Christ in such a way that people are *compelled* by the example of your *ever-growing Christian life*. People will follow if you are *becoming* what they want to *become*:
 - i. *Christian citizen, godly worker, loving husband, effective father, bold witness, prayer warrior.*
 - ii. I could draw my *list* out further, but in the *context* of 1 Peter, I want to add just one more thing the church will be watching: *God's flock will follow the shepherd who suffers fiery ordeals and thus shares the sufferings of Christ.*
 - iii. The willingness to *suffer hardship* as a *good soldier of Christ Jesus* was just the kind of *compelling leadership example* the 1st Century Church (& perhaps soon the 21st Century Church) *desperately* needed to see.

There are wrong ways to lead, and right ways. God's leaders are to eagerly serve God & His flock, first by becoming the kind of shepherd-saint their brothers & sisters are willing to emulate & follow.

The Chief Shepherd will reward His servants.

- A. I'm going to a *great big pastor's conference* in early March. Over **3000** church leaders will be there! I just know what those guys will all be talking about as they compare notes with fellow-shepherds: "*hey, let me tell you what's going on in **my** church!*"
1. "**My church...**" I know what usually motivates that kind of conversation: *enthusiasm & earnestness & affection*.
 2. But you & I know, that *strictly speaking*, no *NT fellowship* belongs to its *elders*.
 3. No *NT flock* is the property of its *very human shepherds*, no matter how good of an *example* they prove to be.
- B. God's *flock* & God's *shepherds* all have one *Chief Shepherd*: **Jesus Christ** is our *Arch-Shepherd*.
1. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*. David's Shepherd-Psalm looks expectantly to the coming Shepherd of God's people.
 2. "*I am the good Shepherd...*" Ten centuries later *Jesus of Nazareth* took up the Shepherd's title.
 3. In **Heb 13:20** –*Jesus our Lord is the great Shepherd of the sheep*.
 4. We have already seen Him in **1 Pt 2:25** as *the Shepherd & Guardian of our souls*.
- C. But Peter's reminder at the end of our text esp. focuses on the *Chief Shepherd's* encouragement to His faithful *under-shepherds*. (Read **v. 4**)
1. Here, again, is one of Peter's *favorite themes*, this time penned to give hope to men who are called to *lead* & perhaps to *suffer* for the *Chief Shepherd's* flock.
 2. It is Peter's appeal to the *last days promise*, to *eschatological hope*: our *Chief Shepherd* is coming.

- D. When He comes, the *Chief Shepherd* will reward His elders who shepherd well.
1. *Modern heroes*, whether from the *battlefield* or the *sports arena*, are often celebrated with a *medal: gold or silver or bronze*, perhaps.
 2. *1st Century heroes* were also honored, but with a crown (or *festival ornament*); the Greek word is *stephanos*. A *wreath* woven of some living material, like *oak or ivy or flower*. A crown that, by & by, simply *faded*.
 - a. But there was one storied flower that tradition claimed *never faded*; kept its blossom *forever*. The *amaranth* became an ancient symbol of *immortality*. And from that bloom the Greeks took their term *amarantanos – unfading*.
 - b. Peter says that in that day that Christ returns, he will honor His shepherds with an *unfading crown of glory* – of *eternal life & reward*.

Hang on, faithful shepherd, your Master is coming, any day now, and He brings your unfading reward.

I'd like to take one last look at v. 2: *shepherd the flock of God*. And remember, Peter's language is probably warmer than most of our translations; perhaps we should say, *the dear flock of God*.

- A. *Whose flock is this - whose flock are we; who is this that loves us & provides for our care? We are **God's** beloved flock! We are **His**!*
- B. *And not His simply because He made us (even though that's true). We are God's beloved flock because He's *paid a price* for us.*
- C. *In fact, Paul made that point exactly in His instructions to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28): "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit made you overseers, to shepherd the flock of God which **He purchased with His own blood**."*
1. *I want to remind you this morning of how you enter God's flock.*
 2. *You must *turn* from your **sins** & *turn* to **Christ**.*
 3. *You must *trust* that His **blood**, shed on the Cross, (= *death suffered as a deliberate sacrifice*) was what God requires to *pay* for all your sins.*
 4. *You must *believe* that Jesus' *death* was real, and that God really *raised Him* from death to life (= *resurrection*).*
 5. *You must follow Christ daily as your *living Lord*. Your *King*. Your **Great Shepherd**.*
- D. *Do you belong to Jesus this morning?*
- Is the Chief Shepherd **your** Shepherd?*

...pray...