

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Shepherding the Flock 1 Peter 5:1-4 Part 3

We have begun examining **1 Peter 5:1-4**. Let us again read this passage of scripture. **“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, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”**

This passage is directed to a group of people called “elders.” And these particular men are entrusted with the care and oversight of New Testament churches.

In **V. 2** Peter is exhorting the elders to “shepherd” the flock of God among them. The elders are therefore viewed by Peter as shepherds and the church that they are caring for is viewed by Peter as sheep. Understanding the image that Peter has set before us leads us to ask a series of questions. The first question is, **WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHEPHERDS?**

1. To keep the sheep together.
2. To provide proper nourishment.
3. To protect the sheep.

This is not an easy job. But it is an essential job. Therefore in order to to prepare these elders to respond positively to the exhortation to shepherd in **V. 2** he gives four different motivations in **V. 1**.

1. He motivates them to shepherd by alerting them to the present crisis facing the church How did Peter do this? Look at the very first word of the first verse.... **“therefore.”** He draws the attention of these elders back to the suffering of the church. In effect Peter is saying, “In light of the present crisis the church is going through **“SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD.”**”
2. He then motivates them to shepherd by identifying himself with them. Reminding them that he is not asking them to do anything that he himself is not willing to do. How did Peter do this? Look at the very next phrase “Therefore I exhort the elders among you, **as your fellow elder.**”
3. He then motivates them to shepherd the flock among them by gently reminding them of His “authority.” How did Peter accomplish this? Let us continue to read the verse, “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and **“witness of the sufferings of Christ.”** Assuming that when Peter is speaking about being a witness he is speaking about being an “eyewitness” of Christ’s sufferings, this would place him in a very special but small group of people.

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And most likely would communicate to his listeners the special place that he himself held in the church as an apostle. In other words it was not just anyone who was asking them to shepherd the flock but it was an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, an apostle.

4. And lastly he motivates them to shepherd the flock among them by pointing to their future glory. How did Peter do this? Let us again look at **V. 1** “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as a 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.**” Keeping the flock of God together, giving proper nourishment and protecting the flock may not be easy in fact at times it may even be dangerous but take heart there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

We are now ready to go on to answer the remaining questions regarding shepherding and the implications for the elders of the church. What is the next question that we need to answer concerning shepherding? The next question is “HOW ARE THE ELDERS TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD?”

HOW ARE THE ELDERS TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD?

It is one thing to know that we are to shepherd and to understand that shepherding would entail keeping the flock together, providing proper nourishment, and protecting the flock and quite another thing to know how to carry these responsibilities out. Peter helps us to understand the answer to this question by making several positive statements.

POSITIVE STATEMENTS

THE ELDERS MUST PUT THEMSELVES IN A POSITION IN THE CHURCH TO GIVE OVERSIGHT. Let us look at **V. 2** “**Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight.**” Elders in seeking to shepherd the flock of God cannot get so immersed in the work of caring for the individual sheep that they lose the overall perspective of the flock as a whole. Have you ever heard the expression “you can’t see the forest for the trees.” This is exactly what the elders are to avoid. The elders cannot ever get so preoccupied with some aspect of the care of the sheep that they lose the ability to give oversight.

What does it mean to exercise “oversight?” The word for oversight is the Greek word EPISKOPEO. Literally it can be translated “to look upon.” The elders or shepherds are, in a sense to take a position on a hill or knoll so that they will be able to “watch over” or “to look upon” the flock. Not just a part of the flock but the whole of the flock..... If the elders of this church ever approach you and want to speak to you about something about your life or ministry please do not think that they are being those “troublesome meddlers” that Peter referred to in **1 Pet. 4:15**. Your life and ministry is their concern as a member of God’s flock which the Lord has made them overseers.

It would be so easy for elders to simply ignore you. It certainly would be a whole lot less work. It would be so easy for elders to let people just live their lives and conduct their ministries in any way that they feel like. It may be easier but it certainly would not be what God has called us to do in respect to the sheep.

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This is an incredibly overwhelming task. This is why a church does not only need elders, but another group of individuals that the New Testament calls “deacons.” These are our officially recognized servants who assist the elders in the care of the flock. The qualifications for the office of deacon are given to us in **1 Tim. 3**. What is very obvious is that the deacons are held to the very same high standard of character as the elders. And it is our desire that there would be a deacon assisting the elders in the oversight of each individual ministry in this fellowship. Have we achieved this goal and the answer is no. But we are making steady progress.

At Valley Bible at this present time we have 10 deacons. They are Larry Hudson, Lance Richards, Dan Jenison, Bill Lokos, Steve Bentley, Rick Balogh, Randy Thompson, Anita Karlis, John Del Frate and Tim Moes. Pray for our church that the Lord will raise up additional men and women to serve in this very important capacity.

So we as elders must recognize the need to keep ourselves from getting pulled into a situation that will keep us from seeing the whole of the flock clearly. But there is another concern that Peter has for us as he tells us how elders are to shepherd. After giving a couple of warnings Peter at the end of **V. 3** says, “... **proving to be examples to the flock.**”

WE MUST PUT OURSELVES IN A POSITION IN THE CHURCH WHERE WE CAN BE AN EXAMPLE.

You should be able to look at the elders of this church and see how you should be living. In respect to holiness, in respect to the love of the brethren, and in respect to the lost of this world. Why? Because they are to be examples. They are to be people that the congregation can model their lives after. Why is this so important?

If the elders fail in this matter it will not be long until the church will reflect our shortcomings. When I was in seminary someone shared that it would take approximately 7 years for a new pastor to see his personal impact on an established congregation. I, in principle, believe this. If the leaders of a church are concerned with personal holiness, it will eventually reflect itself in the life of the church. If the leaders of a church are concerned with the love of the brethren it will eventually to reflect itself in the life of the church. If the leaders of a church are concerned with the salvation of the lost it will eventually reflect itself in the life of the church.

This certainly does not mean that the elders are perfect, but it certainly implies that the church will be a better and stronger church if they have elders who are setting the pace. The elders of Valley should be able to say as Paul in **1 Cor. 11:1**, “**Follow me as I follow Christ.**”

These two positive statements by Peter concerning how we should shepherd can be very challenging. On the one hand the elders are to take oversight of the whole of the flock and yet at the same time we are to be examples to the flock. The work of keeping the sheep together, providing proper nourishment, and protecting the sheep cannot be carried out in isolation from the sheep and yet at the same time the elders must continually be able to step back from their ministry among the sheep to look at the flock as a whole.

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It is a very difficult thing for an elder to maintain this balance, but it must be done. The single truest quality of spiritual leadership is the power of an exemplary life. Certainly leadership can be exercised without conforming to this model but clearly as we see from God's word this is not the kind leadership that the Lord has designed for his church.

Peter is now leaving the positive statements associated with how elders are to shepherd the flock of God to make a couple of negative statements. Or in other words, Peter is telling the elders what they are to avoid as they seek to shepherd the flock.

WE ARE NOT TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK UNDER COMPULSION. We are not to shepherd the flock because we have to do it but rather because we want to do it. Look at **V. 2** “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight **not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God.**” Elders should not be doing what they are doing because they are being pressured to do it.

But someone might think this is contrary to **1 Cor. 9:16** where the apostle says, “**For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.**” Paul is saying he is under compulsion, but Peter is telling us that our ministry as elders should not be under compulsion. How can we harmonize these two passages? Very simply. Paul was under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit. He was being compelled by God Himself to preach the gospel and woe to him if he did not do this. This is entirely different than what Peter is speaking about in **1 Pet. 5**. Peter is talking about elders who may lack the compulsion of the spirit to do the work of shepherding and doing the work because of various external pressures. They lacked the heart for shepherding the flock but found themselves in a position where they had to do it for one reason or another.

I have seen ministers who have gone into the ministry as a career because they enjoyed working with people, but they look at it as a 9 to 5 kind of job and have to be pushed to go any further. I have seen ministers who are willing to do certain things but are unwilling to do other things simply because it would be too difficult. They will sit in their study and prepare a message but don't ask them to get down and dirty with the sheep.

It is a horrible thing when an elder in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ find themselves ministering under compulsion. Not a compulsion coming from the Spirit but rather because of outward pressures.

If elders have to be forced to do their work of shepherding they are in the wrong place. It dishonors the office and exposes the flock of God to trouble. I want to bear witness to the wonderful situation we have at Valley. I am so thankful to be co-laboring with two other men in this fellowship who are serving this fellowship “**voluntarily.**” I have never had to push Gerry or Jim to do anything. They, in fact, are all too eager to do one more thing. They are hard workers and we as a church are blessed to have them serving this fellowship.

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Someone may ask what about your family. Don't the elders have to be concerned about their families. Of course the elders are to be responsible for their families as they are for the church. But these responsibilities are being carried simultaneously. Elders do not have a priority grid of God is number one then my family and then the church. It is Christ at the center as Lord of my life and all other responsibilities form a circle around that. In fact that is the way it should be with you also. We as God's children are always responsible to carry out all the teachings of God's Word. And never will obedience to one command suspend accountability to another command. We are responsible for them all. We must therefore continually remain in prayer for wisdom to know how we are to do this.

We have seen that we as elders in shepherding the flock of God must carry out that shepherding responsibility in such a way that we might put ourselves in a position to be able to oversee as well as be an example at the same time. And as we seek to be an example, that we would not do our ministry under compulsion but voluntarily.

If we are as an example to do our ministry not under compulsion, but voluntarily what are the implications for you? That you also would perform your ministries in the very same way.

Each of you have been given responsibilities within the body of Christ. Is this not so? Of course it is. What does **1 Cor. 12:7** say? **“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”** We are here to serve. We will do so as shepherds with the abilities that God has given us. And you will do so as sheep with the abilities that God has given you. And just as, hopefully, the elders will not perform their task under compulsion neither will you. But let me go even further. **Titus 2:14, “(The Lord)... gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.”** God's people are to be zealous for good works. Neither the shepherds nor the sheep of God's flock should be forced into doing the work God has given them to do. We should do so voluntarily. We should do so even zealously. But if this church is going to be that kind of church it certainly must be true of the elders.

CONCLUSION

I have a dream that we would not lack for laborers, but that people would be standing in line to minister to our children, youth, and adults. This will never occur of course unless it is evident in the lives of the elders.

How are we to shepherd?

Positively or in other words what are we to do?

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1. We are to exercise oversight
2. We are to prove to be examples

Negatively or in other words what are we to avoid? We are not to shepherd under compulsion but voluntarily.