

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Shepherding the Flock 1 Peter 5:1-4 Part 2

We have begun examining **1 Pet. 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 as we stated last week is directed to a group of people called “elders.” And we discovered that elders were entrusted with the care and oversight of New Testament churches.

In this particular passage 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 a flock of 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?** This is not only an important question for the elders here at Valley to answer so that we might perform those duties and perform them faithfully, but it is also an important question for you also to answer so that you might pray for us and hold us accountable to the work that God has entrusted to us.

What did we discover last week concerning the primary responsibilities of the shepherd?

Shepherds have to be diligent in keeping the sheep together. Just like sheep, God’s flock have always had a tendency to wander off. This is why the hymnist when he wrote the words to “Come thou fount of Every Blessing” said, “Prone to wander Lord I feel it prone to leave the God I love.”

Even as I am speaking to you this morning, I am sure if history is any barometer of what is now taking place, that some of you here this morning are in the process of wandering away from the shepherd and from a close relationship with this flock. It is the responsibility of the elders of Valley Bible to seek to prevent that from happening. Besides the individual ministries of the elders to keep people effectively bonded to this fellowship we have established a number of what we call growth groups to help us in this task. Hopefully everyone in this fellowship will be actively involved in such a group or at least within it’s sphere of ministry.

Secondly, shepherds have to be diligent to provide the proper nourishment for the sheep. Just like sheep God’s flock will become malnourished without the faithful work of shepherds to provide that for them. This is why it is so serious when sheep get separated from the flock and the care of shepherds. Steve Bentley was telling me of his experience in the hills not so long ago with he came across three sheep that apparently had become separated from their flock and the care of their shepherd.

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What was very apparent to Steve was the fact that they were in bad shape. Not only do elders need to work at keeping the sheep together but they must work at keeping them properly nourished. We are therefore committed to teach the whole counsel of the Word of God. Not only on the adult level, but also at the children and youth levels.

Thirdly, shepherds must be vigilant to protect the flock from danger. Just like sheep, God's flock is vulnerable to attack for two reasons:

Like sheep God's flock is vulnerable to becoming filthy. Not from the dirt and weeds that gets stuck in our wool but rather with the sin that so easily besets us.

Also like sheep God's flock is vulnerable to attack from predators. I do not want to mislead you to think that a male ram cannot do some damage to you if he has a mind to cause you trouble. What I am saying that if a flock of sheep come under attack from predators such as dogs, coyotes or wolves they will be defenseless against them.

Peter is addressing a specific group of people called elders and he is exhorting them to "shepherd the flock of God." What are the responsibilities of the shepherds? To keep the flock together, to make sure they are properly nourished, and to protect them from danger. This is not an easy job but Peter has prepared them well in this epistle to step forward and to assume these very important responsibilities. HOW HAS HE DONE THIS?

HE ALERTS THEM. HE DOES THIS BY REMINDING THEM OF THE CRISIS THAT THE CHURCH IS FACING. Let us look at the very first word of the very first verse. **"Therefore I exhort the elders among you"** Notice that the exhortation to the elders to shepherd is flowing from what has preceded chapter five. And what has preceded in chapter 5? Let us go back to the very last section of scripture in chapter 4. And look at **V. 12**. What does it say? **"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for you testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."** Clearly suffering is very much in view in this section of scripture. Look at how many references there are to suffering. **V. 13 "but to the degree you share the sufferings of Christ....."** Then again in **V. 15 "By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer etc."** Then once more in **V. 16 "but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.** And finally look at **V. 19 "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."** The churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were undergoing extreme suffering. When a congregation is under attack either from the outside such as we have here under the persecution from Nero. Or from the inside by those who would be speaking perverse things. The elders who are the shepherds of God's flock must not abandon their post.

It might have been very tempting for these elders who were serving the churches of Asia Minor to find some hole somewhere to hide in until the persecution under Nero faded away. But Peter would have none of that. The church was experiencing difficulty and there were even more difficult times to come and the church of Christ needed their elders to take a front and center position.

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SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD IS ALWAYS NECESSARY BUT CERTAINLY DURING TIMES OF CRISIS IT IS EVEN MORE SO. A church crisis is not a time for elders or in other words the shepherds to go AWOL. I am continually amazed at ministers that leave their churches to go to another church. And I will be honest with you that I am typically disappointed at the reasons they give for doing so. And I am particularly grieved when they do so when it appears that they have done it to get themselves out of a bad situation.

Peter, in light of the present testing of the church, is not encouraging the elders to find a place of safety but rather, because of the need in the church, to step forward and SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD. Peter before giving to them the very strong exhortation to Shepherd has prepared the way for them to respond positively first of all through having reminded them of the present crisis.

But Peter is not done yet. How else does he prepare these elders to respond positively? HE IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH THEM. REMINDING THEM THAT HE IS NOT ASKING THEM TO DO ANYTHING THAT HE HIMSELF DOES NOT UNDERSTAND FROM FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE AS A FELLOW ELDER. Let us look at the verse, **“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder.”** Yes Peter is calling them to do a difficult task in a very difficult situation but he is not asking them to do anything less than he himself is willing to do. Yes he is calling them to shepherd the flock of God, keeping them together, nourishing them and protecting them. But it is no less than he himself is willing to do as a fellow shepherd.

I played basketball at Dominguez High School in Compton. In preparation for our season I remember the varsity coach would have us run wind sprints for what seemed like an eternity. He would blow his whistle and we would sprint one direction and then he would blow his whistle again and we would sprint the other direction. I remember how badly my body wanted to quit. The pain that I was experiencing was intense, but there was no way that I was going to quit as long as the others on the team were continuing. Peter was asking these elders to only do what he himself was doing. When he said to them, **“I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder..... to shepherd the flock of God among you”** he was not asking them to do anything less than he himself was doing. He was in the trenches with them and was simply calling them to keep on keeping on.

In calling himself a “fellow elder”, Peter no doubt was thinking of the commission given him by the risen Lord to shepherd His flock in **John 21:15-17**. You probably remember the exchange between Jesus and Peter following the resurrection of Christ before His ascension. **“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, “tend 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.”** Jesus was calling upon Peter to shepherd His flock not as a church elder but as an apostle. Though much broader in scope, the apostolic office included the work of the leaders. What the elders were for the individual congregations, so were the apostles for the whole church. Peter thus indicated that he “personally felt the responsibilities, and from experience knew the difficulties of an elder.” But even so he was continuing on in this task and was calling them to do the same. But this is not all there is, still more that Peter uses to prepare them to respond positively.

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Not only did he prepare them to respond positively to this exhortation to shepherd by reminding them of the crisis at hand and by identifying himself with them in the work that they had to do. HE GENTLY REMINDS THEM OF HIS AUTHORITY. Let us look at the next phrase, **“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ.”**

A witness was one who saw and proclaimed what he saw. In Peter’s case it is synonymous with apostle. In **Luke 24:44-48** it says, **“Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law and Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (45) Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (46) and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; (47) and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (48) You are witnesses of these things.”**

The apostles were commissioned to be eyewitnesses of the things that they saw and they were faithful to that. When Peter talks about being an eyewitness of Christ’s sufferings there is no way that he did not remember back to the commission that Christ had given which is recorded for us in **Luke 24:44-48**.

It is interesting that Peter spent so much time bearing witness to the sufferings of Christ which he had witnessed over and against so many other glorious things that he saw. If you doubt this is so consider this epistle. He bears witness to the sufferings of Christ in **1:17-18; 2:21; 2:24; 3:18; 4:1 and 4:13**. Why would Peter spend so much time referring to the sufferings of Christ? It is because he understood from personal experience how difficult it was for the Jews accept it. Certainly this was true of Peter. Do you remember the exchange between Jesus and Peter in **Matt. 16:22** where Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from suffering. So much so that he rebuked Jesus. **V. 22** says, **“And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”** And what did Jesus do? **“But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”**

But someone may say, but this was an isolated case with Peter certainly this did not apply to the Jews as a whole. But this is not so. What does Paul say about this issue in **1 Cor. 1:23** **“we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.”** Certainly when Peter presents himself as an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ he is alluding to his special place in the church of Jesus Christ. And in a very gentle way reminding them the authority that he possesses as an apostle. And this apostle who has reminded them of the crisis that is presently facing the church and identified himself with them in the task at hand is commanding them to shepherd the flock of God. But there is more.

HE POINTS TO THEIR FUTURE GLORY. REMINDING THEM THAT THEY WILL BE PARTAKERS TOGETHER OF A FUTURE GLORY. Look again at **V. 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.”**

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Peter had a glimpse of that glory at the transfiguration of Christ. In **2 Pet. 1:16-18** it says, **“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. (17) For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” -- (18) and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”** Yes, Peter had been an eyewitness but he was looking forward to another time period when he would be more than that. When he would also be a participant. But he would not be alone in this experience. He would experience along with these fellow elders.

Isn't this exactly what it says. **“And a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.”** When will this be revealed. It will be revealed when Jesus returns to catch us up together with Him. This of course is not the hope just of elders but the whole of the church of Jesus Christ.

Those who are laboring, serving and even suffering in the name of Christ need a light at the end of the tunnel and we in fact have that.

Peter is addressing elders in this particular passage. He is addressing those who have been given responsibility for the care and oversight of the local church. And he is commanding them to shepherd the flock of God.

CONCLUSION

Elders who are shepherding the flock of God have certain responsibilities. And what exactly are those responsibilities? They need to keep the sheep together, they need to provide proper nourishment, and they need to protect the sheep from whatever might threaten them whatever that might be.

This is not an easy task!!! It is a very difficult and tiring responsibility. So in order to prepare these elders to embrace the exhortation to shepherd enthusiastically Peter,

- 1) Alerts them - Reminding them of the crisis that the church is facing.
- 2) Identifies himself with them - Reminding them that he is not asking them to do anything that he himself is not willing to do as a fellow elder.
- 3) Gently reminds them of his authority - Reminding them that he is an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ.
- 4) And finally He points to their future hope - Reminding them that they will be partakers together of a future glory.