

# *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

## **Shepherding the Flock 1 Peter 5:1-4 Part 4**

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 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 helps us to answer a very important question. **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 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. 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.

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4. And lastly he motivates them to shepherd the flock amongst 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.

It is one thing to know what are responsibilities are as shepherds and to be motivated to carry those responsibilities out and quite another thing to know, **HOW WE ARE TO CARRY OUT THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES?** Peter helps us to understand “how” first of all by making several positive statements.

1. First of all, 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.”**

2. Secondly we must put ourselves in a position in the church where we can be an “example” Let us look at **V. 3, “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”** This is not an easy balance to achieve on the one hand to put ourselves in the position to give oversight and yet at the same time being close enough to the sheep to be able to be an example.

In addition to these two positive statements we also have several negative statements. Or, in other words, behaviors that the elders were to avoid.

1. Elders are not to shepherd the flock under compulsion. Look at **V. 2 “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God.....”** The elders are to carry out their responsibilities as shepherds because they want to, not because they have to. This is where we left off last week.

We are now going to continue to consider other behaviors elders are to avoid as they carry out their responsibilities as shepherds.

### ELDERS ARE NOT TO SHEPHERD FOR SORDID GAIN

Look at **V. 2 “shepherd the flock of God among, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.”** Elders are not to shepherd for “sordid gain.” What does Peter mean when he talks about sordid gain?

The word translated “sordid gain” literally means “fond of dishonest gain.” When we think of “dishonest gain” we might think of an elder who might be stealing from the offerings boxes, embezzling church funds, or in some other way defrauding people entrusted to their charge through illegal means. But we are not talking about illegal activity but rather we are talking about dishonest activity. On the one hand we represent ourselves as shepherds concerned only for the welfare of the sheep but all the while we are only concerned about the money that we might receive for services rendered.

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Even though the behavior that he is speaking of here is not primarily illegal it certainly is “criminal” in a spiritual sense because we have failed to honor the teachings of God’s law and have not followed in the footsteps of Jesus, the good shepherd.

Are there ministers who are actually motivated to do their ministry out of personal gain? Obviously this must be so in light of the exhortation that is being given here by Peter. And it is a terrible thing when an elder or minister is seen by the world or the church as doing what they do for money. Certainly Paul was aware of this. In **1 Cor. 9:7-14**, after making it clear that he and others who ministered spiritual things in their lives had the right to reap material things from them, went on to say in **V. 12**, **“If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.”** It is important that you know that your elders the shepherds of this flock are not doing what they do for the money they receive. I believe that those who know Lynn and I, Gerry and Kelly, Jim and Debbie will testify to this fact. If you begin to look at us as hirelings rather than shepherds a terrible thing as taken place. Far better for us. **“To endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.”**

This is why you will not see us lobbying the church for salary increases, this is why you will not see us charging fees for services rendered, and this is why you will not see us protecting our salaries when the health and welfare of Valley Bible Church is at stake.

I don’t want you to think as I am sharing with you that it has always been easy to maintain this focus. The ministry is not typically a place where people find financial ease. And there have been times over the course of my ministry here at Valley that I have struggled as I watched my wife having to maintain a household and provide for our children on so little. But haven’t we all struggled in some way or another. And when we we find ourselves in that situation what are we to do? We need to approach God’s throne of grace to receive grace to help in the time of our need. It is God’s grace that makes it possible to be content and endure all things.

Even today I need the grace of God ministered to me so that I might be content. Not because of a lack of financial support but with the abundance of that support. I believe I have come to understand what Paul meant when he said in **Phil. 4:11-12** **“Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”** It is the spirit of contentment that allows us not to do our ministry for **“sordid gain.”** And I believe that this is true of Gerry and Kelly and Jim and Debbie.

What else are elders not to do if they are going to shepherd the flock of God properly?

### ELDERS ARE NOT TO LORD IT OVER THE FLOCK

Let us read **V. 3** **“nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge.”** What does **“lording it over”** mean? This phrase has caused a great deal of confusion, I believe, in Christ’s church.

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Many people consider elders to be lording it over a church when they as elders seek to get people to do what they want by appealing to their authority as elders whether the people feel like doing it or not. In support of this position they will turn to **Matt. 20:24-28**. The mother of the sons of Zebedee was seeking a place of honor for her two sons in the future kingdom. Jesus responded to her appropriately, but the ten other disciples of Jesus had a problem, **“And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. (25) But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. (26) It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, (27) And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; (28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Clearly in this passage there is a contrast being drawn between the Gentile rulers and what they were doing and the apostles of Christ and what they should be doing. What is that contrast? Is the contrast in respect to authority or in respect to servanthood? Clearly the contrast is in respect to servanthood. Authority is not the problem. The problem is how is that authority going to be exercised.

The gentile rulers had authority but they used it to serve themselves. This is what is not acceptable. But hopefully the apostles of Christ would stand in stark contrast to the gentile rulers. And if there is any question as to this emphasis Jesus points to himself in **V. 28, “Just as the son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Did Jesus have authority as the earthly Messiah? Did His apostles look to Him and saw Him as someone to be obeyed? Yes but as the Messiah He did not serve Himself but rather to serve and give His life a ransom for many.

Peter is exhorting the elders here as shepherds of the flock of God not to lord it over the flock. He is saying that they are not to use their authority as elders in order to serve themselves. The word “lording it over” is composed of two words “KATA” which means “against” and “KUPIEYO” which means “to exercise lordship.” The elders are lording it over the flock when they exercise the authority that the Lord has given them against the flock which God entrusted to them in order to serve themselves.

Some of you here this morning may be surprised to hear that elders in fact have authority. But it really shouldn't be surprising at all. The Lord has given to the elders a very difficult task. It is not easy keeping the sheep together, it is not easy bringing proper nourishment, and it is not easy to protect the flock. In order to assist the elders in this task he has given them authority. He has called the church to obey them. In **Heb. 13:17** it says, **“Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”**

Have we in fact actually done this at Valley. Have the elders exercised their authority? Asking people to do things that those people really did not want to do? And the answer is yes! We have. Does this mean that we have “Lorded it over this fellowship?” Hopefully the answer to that question is no. And the reason is because as best as we know we have asked people to do things even when they did not feel the same way did for the welfare of this fellowship and not to simply serve our own personal interests.

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We have asked people to follow certain courses of action, we have asked people to alter certain teaching materials or to abandon certain materials altogether. In fact nearly five years ago we asked our entire congregation to separate from an individual in this fellowship in an effort to protect this fellowship and to restore a sinning brother.

This fellowship has for the most part done well in carrying out their responsibilities before the Lord in following our lead. Hopefully we will do as well as you in the responsibilities that the Lord has given us to use the authority the Lord has entrusted to us not in serving ourselves but rather this flock that the Lord has entrusted to our charge.

Now we come to another basic question. Not only does this passage help us to understand what are responsibilities are as shepherds. Not only does this passage help us to understand how we are to shepherd. But it also gives to us a reason why.

### WHY WE SHOULD SHEPHERD?

Let us read **V. 4, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”** The word of “crown” is not DIADEM which is a regal crown but rather STEPHANOS which is a crown which is extended to a victor. This is why elders should shepherd the flock of God. That they might receive from the chief shepherd a crown of victory.

Each of us has been given a place of responsibility within the body of Christ. Each of us within that place of responsibility has a race to run. We need to run that race to win. We need to run that race in such a way that we might wear the victor’s crown.