

God's Undershepherd

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 5:1-14

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Look with me, if you will, into 1 Peter chapter five as we come to the last chapter of 1 Peter. Remembering that this was written as Peter was getting on in years, certainly one whom the Lord was pleased to teach. And as you read from the gospels all the way to here you can see just how the Lord graciously strengthened him, taught him, matured him and he is writing now to the believers who are dispersed over a broad area as cast abroad. "Scattered" is the word that he uses in the first chapter just like you take seed and scatter it over an area on the field. And yet we see here a tenderness and a care that he has for each one of the Lord's. To me this is an example of what it is to be a true minister of the Lord, that you count each one of his sheep as very precious. It doesn't matter how many. But as he brings different ones of his sheep into the fold and the oversight of one of the Lord's, that one who is the Lord's is going to care for them as belonging to the Lord.

And so he writes here in 1 Peter five, "The elders which are among you I exhort,"¹ and then he says:

...who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

¹ 1 Peter 5:1.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is at Babylon [that would be Rome], elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.²

So this really has to do with pastoring the Lord's sheep. And I know that that title is used to give a relevance to certain men today in religion. Men love to put the word "pastor" after their name. But imagine if you were in the world among some of the elite and someone asked you what you did. You said, "Well, I am a sheep herder. I herd sheep. I farm sheep." How important or significant would that be in the eyes of the world? It probably wouldn't be much at all compared to a doctor, compared to a lawyer, compared to a banker. And yet somehow that term which has been used or is used in Scripture to describe really a function of humility has become in the religious world a title of entitlement to where even you go into restaurants or you go into stores you hear some of these religious men asking for their discount. You know, where did that all start?

Well, it started back in the day of clergy which somehow men were elevated in the eyes of people and treated as kings or as gods. And men would fear being cursed if they didn't do everything just right in front of this man who has given himself this title.

Should we throw out the term just because men abuse it? Not at all. It is a scriptural term. But what we have to do is educate ourselves and educate others as to what we mean when those titles are used.

You see here Peter begins with regard to these titles. Here he said, "The elders which are among you I exhort."³

The word "elder" is really a synonym of the word "pastor." The word "pastor" means shepherd or under shepherd. What does a pastor do? A shepherd of the sheep? He oversees those sheep. He cares for them. He guards them. He protects them. And certainly that is an apt description of those that the Lord has placed.

And notice here in verse now, "Who are among you," not over you, but among you, placed in a place to be among the sheep.

What is a shepherd that is not among the sheep? You know, this is not something you supervise by remote control. It is being right there with the sheep, knowing them and

² 1 Peter 5:1-14.

³ 1 Peter 5:1.

understanding them. So when Peter uses the word “elder” here I don’t believe that it is just speaking an age although the term implies maturity. It implies men who the Lord has taught and whose business it is not only to teach and preach the Word among the Lord’s people, but to give guidance to the sheep. That is a big responsibility.

You know, there are days when if I weigh my own self even with a small congregation and consider the weight of what it is to speak to men and women and children about the glory of Christ, it becomes overwhelming, very overwhelming.

But here you can see Peter speaking to his fellow elders, not putting himself above them, because he says, “The elders which are among you I exhort,”⁴ he says, “who am also an elder.”⁵ Not above them. See, this whole idea of hierarchy comes from religious organization where you have got your pastors and then you have got your lay preachers. You know, you will hear of a senior pastor and assistant pastor. We don’t see any of those terms described in Scripture. Peter just says, “Who am also an elder.”⁶

And notice where he derives his authority. You know, it is not... it is certainly not his education. That, again is religion, what religion does. The more educated you get, you get your master’s degree and then you get your doctorate, you know, not only a doctorate in religion, but now master of divinity and then your PhD. There is men that love to tack on these particular titles and demand respect and authority because they have them.

Here Peter states two things. He says, one, “A witness of the sufferings of Christ,”⁷ and, two, “A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”⁸

Now, you stop and think about that. What kind of man would you want to hear, one that has a doctorate, that has been to a school where they taught all kinds of philosophies and religion or somebody who can simply stand up and declare that he is a witness of the sufferings of Christ?

Peter was speaking of being an eye witness. He was there, you know? He didn’t have much of a testimony even there to declare because he fled with the best of them. And yet when he says, “A witness of the sufferings of Christ,”⁹ he is not only talking about the fact that Christ suffered and died, but why he died. He is stating, “I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ because I am one of those sheep for whom he died.”

Now there is a man that has a testimony. There is a man that has something to say when he knows something of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter puts it as number one. And then he says, “A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”¹⁰

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

What glory is he talking about? Well, he saw the glory of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He saw him die. He saw him rise again. He saw him ascend on high. The Lord gave him a glimpse of that glory that all whom Christ has redeemed and for whom he died will partake in one day as we gather round the throne of grace.

He saw these things again with his visible eye. We see them by faith. But isn't that what our hope is? My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

And so the title that he gives here with regard to a pastor, an overseer of the Lord's sheep we see as one... that is in connection with Christ and his death.

The second thing we see here with regard to a pastor, not only the title, but his role. You know, what is the role of a pastor? Well, you can go to a bookstore, a religious bookstore and read all kinds of books about this. You know, you can dust off some pretty big thick old books about what it is to have an eldership in the Church and, you know, I have been involved in some congregations where that becomes the issue. You have to have elders. You have to have so many and we have to give them all job titles and so you have to go the whole body organized to death about what each one is doing.

I like the simplicity of Scripture. You know, here in a few verses we have a total description of the nature and the role of what it is to be an elder, what it is to be a pastor. And it is very simply put.

“Feed the flock of God which is among you.”¹¹

It doesn't talk about visitation programs. It doesn't talk about visiting people in the hospital. It doesn't talk about visiting people in the jails. It doesn't talk about doing funerals or weddings.

You know, these are things that religious organizations expect of somebody that is a pastor and, you know, if you don't do those things in many organizations well, you are not fulfilling your job title.

I would rather that none of that be done and that the only thing I would be known for was just feeding the sheep of God. Now there is people that have a idea that you have got to constantly, you know, make sure you make the route through the membership every year. Make sure you get together with everybody and kind of do an evaluation of how each one is doing, the family. And so you do house visitation, all these things.

I have been involved in that kind of organization before and I will tell you, all it does is stir up trouble because people see you coming. You know, I was up in Grand Rapids, Michigan and it was... it is comical in one sense, but it is not. They would call their preachers [?] which means Lord in Dutch. That is a Dutch country up there, Dutch

¹¹ 1 Peter 5:2.

Calvinists. And people up there had back when they had TV antennas. I don't know what they do today with satellite dishes. But they knew the [?] would not approve of having TVs in their home. So what did they do? They put TVs in these cabinets that are built into the wall so if someone saw the [?] walking up the walk, they would shut the door on the TV.

And antennas weren't on the roofs. They were inside the attic. All the houses had attics. So if a [?] walked up he didn't see a TV antenna. He didn't see a TV, you know, that was considered to be a sanctified home.

You can see how people, when you make them accountable to men, will use every device in the book to try to hide what they really are.

Why make men accountable to us? We are responsible to do one thing as it says here. "Feed the flock of God."¹²

So that says a lot right there. Whose sheep are they? Well, they are the Lord's. And what is the responsibility of a faithful pastor? It is to feed the flock. What is the sheep's food? What is sheep's food? It is Christ. It is his death. This is what the Lord's people rejoice in and this is what we are called upon to do.

Whose flock is it? Whose sheep are they? Well, they are the Lord's.

If you look in John chapter 21 I have seen some go so far in this role of elder and some of this stuff you may not believe, but it is true. You know, to where they go and look in the refrigerator to see what kind of food you buy and what kind of... if you have any alcoholic drinks. I have seen some responsible, you know, the elders of finance to literally sit down and take a person's checkbook and go over that checkbook and make sure that the tithe is being paid. These are all true stories. These are all things that to what extremes that men will go to exert their authority as elders.

But none of that Peter describes here. He just simply says that those who are elders or pastors are to feed the people of God.

In John 21 remember this is our Lord's confrontation with Peter. I say confrontation. It was a kind dealing with him. And don't you know when Peter was writing this over here in 1 Peter five that this would have come to mind? Because it says here:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."¹³

When you think of lambs those are small sheep. Those are weak sheep. Those are ones that, you know, might easily be devoured were it not for [?].

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John 21:15.

“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”¹⁴

So again there whomever they may be, my sheep, feed them.

“He saith to him the third time...”¹⁵

Some people ask, “Well, why three times?”

Well, how many times did, you know, Peter deny our Lord? This is just a kind gentle reminder, “Peter, here I am. I have died and rose again that you might have life. And every sin has been paid for.”

You know, when Peter talks there in 1 Peter five about being a witness of the sufferings of Christ, you know he is remembering this, how he denied the Lord three times before the cock crowed.

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?”¹⁶

You can take that in a couple of ways, but this is a broken heart. This is one that as the Lord brought it home to him, he remembered his own weakness and denial.

“And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”¹⁷

He didn't change it, but three times, “Feed my sheep.”

That is as simple as it gets. You know, whose flock is it? He says, “Feed my sheep.”

Christ said, “My sheep hear my voice.”¹⁸

And so it is not our responsibility to spend time trying to organize people and run their lives and drive them. He didn't say, “Drive my sheep.”

You know, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want... he leadeth me.”¹⁹

And so ours is but to feed them.

In Acts chapter 20 and verse 28:

¹⁴ John 21:16.

¹⁵ John 21:17.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ John 10:27.

¹⁹ Psalm 23:1, 2.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves.”²⁰

You see, that is where it begins.

“Take heed [to] yourselves.”²¹

Peter said, “I... who am also an elder [among you].”²²

“And to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...”²³ Do you see this? “...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”²⁴

That Church which is precious unto Christ because having been purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Feed my sheep.”

So this is the role of one who is an elder, a pastor over the Lord’s sheep. And I have a little saying that is right above my desk in my study at the house that asks that question. Whose sheep are they? They are the Lord’s.

That gives me great comfort because I am not trying to get the Lord’s sheep even to walk in step. Can you imagine that if that were the assignment? How could you get sheep to walk in step? Every sheep has its own character. You would spend all day long trying to, you know... But that is what a lot of people think is their role as preachers and religious leaders and organizers trying to get everybody.

And, you know, as far as making robots out of people, they do a pretty good job. A lot of them they are taught to pray the same way. So now the tone of their voice changes, you know, whenever they go from just regular conversation to some sanctimonious way of talking to God. It is all a show. It is a put on. But that is not what we are to do.

We are to lead, but as it says here in verse two it says, “Taking the oversight.”²⁵

You know, the saying is, “Lead or get out of the way.” The whole manner and direction of a flock, we are talking about a local congregation, takes its manner from its leadership and so he says, “Taking the oversight thereof.”²⁶

²⁰ Acts 20:28.

²¹ Ibid.

²² 1 Peter 5:7.

²³ Acts 20:28.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 1 Peter 5:2.

²⁶ Ibid.

Someone has got to lead. The Lord has put that congregation together. There is going to be men that he has raised up to take that leadership, but notice it says, “Not by constraint.”²⁷

No one ought to be coerced or constrained to a position of leadership. I believe it is the Lord that raises up those he would have to lead his flock. But also it says “Willingly, not for filthy lucre,”²⁸ not for personal advantage, not for pay.

You know, I am thankful for what this congregation does of me, but, you know, if things should come apart and you were to say to me, “We could no longer pay you,” that wouldn’t change my message. It wouldn’t change me showing up here to preach so long as the Lord enables me to point you to Christ and to his work that he has accomplished.

I remember visiting a congregation in Africa one time. I was the invited speaker and several months earlier the preacher had asked me to come preach for his congregation. But when I showed up he wasn’t anywhere to be found and, you know, a couple of men received me and told me to come in and sit down.

I said, “Well, where is the preacher?”

They said, “He is on strike.”

I said, “The preacher is on strike?”

And they said, “Yeah,” that he hadn’t gotten his pay, you know, from the last month, so he told the congregation until they could collect the money and bring it to him he wasn’t coming to church anymore.

You sit there and think, well, that sounds really crazy, but men are driven by filthy lucre. They are... they consider that they need to be paid for everything they do. And they are happy to do wedding ceremonies. They are happy to do funerals because they have their fee. And all these things are considered to be as it is described here filthy lucre. If that is what motivates a person, you know, if it is money or wealth that the person is looking for find that in a every day job in the world. Don’t expect to live of the back of the church.

Also it say here “willingly , not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”²⁹

In other words, a cheerful spirit. You know, the whole notion of showing up and with the idea of chewing everybody out. There are preachers of that type. You know, you just cringe when you sit there because you are thinking, who is he going to be pointing out this week? In fact, one preacher told me that when I asked him how he did his preparation.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

He said he visited the homes during the week to figure out what wasn't right and then on Sunday he stood up and preached about those things. That is what directed him.

That is not what we are to do. It is to be for the glory of Christ and with a very cheerful spirit with a ready mind to point sinners to Christ.

As we look at verse three, again, under the role of a pastor and elder, we see that the ministering is to be done with a sincere, but humble manner.

It says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage."³⁰

And there it is interesting. There again, verse two, flock of God, verse three, God's heritage. The word "heritage" is a term that involves a will. It involves something that belongs to another. And, you know, it is a reminder again of how sinners have become a part of God's heritage. It is through that blood shed of the Lord Jesus Christ and that righteousness that he worked out and that God imputed.

So we are not to be lords over, to rule with an iron hand over God's people as though we were kings or lords, but it says here, "Being ensamples."³¹

You know, being a pattern would be a good translation of that word to the flock of love, of kindness, of doctrinal soundness.

Again, people will follow a man in that direction that he leads them. I realize that on the one hand we are not supposed to follow men, but on the other hand I know every time I stand up here I have got your attention and I am going to direct you one way or another. And I believe that what Peter is pointing to here is that there is only one direction that any ought to point sinners to and that is to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In reality we are but under shepherds, not lords. We are not even shepherds. We are under shepherds as it says there in verse four.

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."³²

That title "chief Shepherd" doesn't belong to a man. So to call somebody a senior pastor is totally contrary to scripture. Pastors are called shepherds in the Scriptures, but really we are but under shepherds because Christ is the great Shepherd. He is the shepherd of his sheep. He is the great Shepherd. Here it is even a stronger term, the chief Shepherd, that when he will appear those that have been his under shepherds, the pastors, the elders, will glorify him just as they have encouraged and instructed the people to do throughout their lifetime.

³⁰ 1 Peter 5:3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² 1 Peter 5:4.

When it says there in verse four that they will “receive the crown of glory,”³³ this is not just reserved for preachers. Don’t think that there is going to be special section in glory for preachers. They will receive the crown of glory. It is a symbolic term of being glorified. You know, to be free from this body, to be free from the restraints of living in this flesh and to be in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, based upon his work that he came and accomplished. When he come again we are going to enjoy that glory. That is going to be... he will be our crown of glory. And that is not just reserved for preachers.

If you look over in 2 Timothy chapter four and verse eight notice the crown of glory is described here as the crown of righteousness. We sang about it just before this message.

The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Savior’s face.

So our glory in the presence of Christ when he comes again will be to be with out sin, just as he is, will be to have the full effects of his death and why he died revealed, where we will be fully glorified.

And Paul says that, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: [but notice] and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”³⁴

So there is not any hierarchy. There is no clergy and laity with regard to Christ’s work. There is one body even though we have different functions in the body, but one is not elevated above the other and we will all enjoy that glory which the Lord Jesus Christ purchased as described here as that glory that fadeth not away, so an eternal glory.

All right. Then we come to the character of those that are the Lord’s under shepherds. We have seen their title, their role and now e see their character in verse five of 1 Peter five.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”³⁵

Those that are the Lord’s under shepherds certainly are to be ones who have been proven by experience. They are spiritual leaders. The younger, as it describes here, I don’t know as it means necessarily in age, but perhaps in experience, perhaps in faith. You know, the younger, those that are newly brought to Christ. They are to respect and to learn from those that the Lord has placed in these positions of leadership and those in leadership are to teach them and to point them again to Christ and his work that he has finished.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ 2 Timothy 4:8.

³⁵ 1 Peter 5:5.

But you notice, this is not just something pertaining to the preacher or to the elder or the pastor, however you want to refer to him. It says in verse five, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.”³⁶

So, in other words, this ought to be something that is taught throughout the congregation. There is none better than another. We are all sinners. We all come from the same father Adam. And if we enjoy a state of forgiveness of sins, of pardon, of righteousness, it is not because of anything in any one of us. So even as the preacher is not to Lord himself over the congregation, so no member of the congregation is to Lord themselves over any other, that we are all to be clothed in humility. There is no reason for arrogance. There is no reason for pride. You know, those are things that come from the flesh and not from the Spirit. And here it says that God sets himself against the proud.

It doesn't mean that he is just watching over and every time somebody gets proud he is thumping him. That is not in that sense, but the term, you see, “God resisteth the proud...”³⁷ You are pulling one way. And what do you do with your child when he is just insistent on going some way? You pull him back and he is going. You might just let him go and let him experience that fall. And they cry for a while or whatever. They get up, a scraped knee. And what do you tell them?

“There is a reason why I have got your hand. There is a reason why I am directing you. Quit pulling that way.”

You know, those that are boastful and know their own mind, they think too highly of themselves, you know, more than they ought to think, there is a day when the Lord is going to humble them if they are the Lord's sheep. He is going to humble them before others in the congregation. You spend your time looking down your nose at somebody else. You are overbearing. You are boastful. You are presumptuous, you know, that attitude shouldn't be in a congregation and it shouldn't be in the pulpit. It is not a matter of preaching down to people. But it says here he gives grace to the humble.

That is really what humbles us is the grace of God, the understanding, the knowledge that but for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but for his righteousness, that he worked out as my representative, I really would have no standing at all.

And so this is an attitude. It is a character that I believe is prevalent among those that truly are taught of the Lord. And he says there in verse six, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”³⁸

Better silence before the Lord than boasting. Better to lay at Christ's feet than to stand tall and endeavor to prove to others that, you know, you have come a long way.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ 1 Peter 5:6.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.”³⁹

How does the Lord humble his own? Isn't it through affliction? Isn't it through trouble? Isn't it through trial?

You know, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”⁴⁰

So this affects how our attitude is going to be toward one another. You know, not seeing ourselves as better than any, but to see ourselves as that sinner for whom Christ died, not looking for recognition and praise.

You know, I am blessed when you tell me afterward the Lord blessed me, but I don't need recognition. I don't need praise. In fact, I get a little bit uneasy when it seems like that is all that a person is doing is flattering you. There is no room for flattery. You know, I am but a sinner standing up here telling you of the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if the Lord blesses that to your heart to where your heart is humbled before him, I thank you. But there is no room for flattery or patting a person on the back and speaking highly of the messenger. It is not the messenger, it is the message and the message being Christ. He is the one who is to be exalted.

And so all of these things are ways that the Lord uses to teach and to instruct those that are his.

I am going to stop there for now. We will come back to verse seven next time because he continues on down here how as the Lord teaches us and as he brings affliction and trial and testing into our lives, what is the purpose? What is the Lord doing through this?

You know, you read this 23rd Psalm. We like the part where it says he leads us by the still waters, but we kind of shirk back when it says, it speaks there of, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”⁴¹ Why? “For thou art with me.”⁴²

And so we are going to look at that the Lord willing next time.

Let's take our hymn books and we will sing hymn number 340.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:12.

⁴¹ Psalm 23:4.

⁴² Ibid.