

### 8.15.21 ~ 1Peter 5:1-4, Shepherding the Flock

Read **1Peter 5:1-4**... "Therefore" refers back to Peter's encouragement and exhortation to the believers, in **1Peter 4:12-19**, concerning their suffering on behalf of Christ. These believers are, in a sense being tested, as they share in the sufferings of Christ because of their witness for Christ and testimony of the gospel of salvation through Christ.

Peter now (**1Peter 5**) turns his attention to exhort [strongly encourage] the elders to be examples to the flock [the Family of God]; for the elders are the leadership God has given to the believers and followers of Christ.

Paul says (**Ephesians 4:11-13**), "And He [Christ] gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

There are three specific terms used in the NT that refer to the men God has appointed to serve His Church. These terms are used interchangeably to refer to the same man, describing: who he is, what he does, how he does it.

Elder [presbuteros] speaks to who the man is: he is spiritually mature, a man of integrity.

Overseer [episkopos] speaks to what the man does: he guards and manages the church.

Shepherd/Pastor [poimen] speaks to how the man serves: he feeds [teaches], leads, and protects

Peter tells us this man is to watch over and care for God's people.

**1Peter 5:1-3**, "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, **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; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

**1Timothy 5:17**, "The **elders** who **rule** well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at **preaching and teaching**."

**Acts 20:17**, "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church," **28**, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Clearly there is to be a plurality of **elders** in each church, and the elders are to be **overseers**, as they **shepherd** the flock of God [the Church], which has been purchased for God by the shed blood of God's Son.

These men who are to servant-lead the church (not lording over those under their care), are (**1Peter 5:3**), "to be examples to the flock," by the way they live

out their life for Christ. This is why there are specific qualifications (character traits that are displayed in both attitude and action) given in the Scriptures (**1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9**).

Look again at **1Peter 5:1-3...** There are some very clear "do's and don'ts" given here:

Elders are to care for the flock of God as Shepherds/Pastors, while exercising oversight.

Elders are not to serve under compulsion (from external pressure or coercion), nor out of greed.

Elders are not to serve as domineering or autocratic dictators.

Elders are to serve willingly and eagerly, being compelled from the heart, out of a love from God for those who belong to God.

The two main areas of duty and responsibility, given to the elders, come under the headings of **Teaching** (Ephesians 4:11; 1Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9) and **Governing** (Acts 20:28; 1Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; 1Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17; 1Peter 5:2); elders also have the responsibility to acknowledge, affirm, and appoint other elders to the Church (Acts 14:23; 2Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5).

Jesus Christ is the example of how all Christians are to live (**1John 2:4-6**), "By this we know that we have come to know Him [Christ], if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk [live] in the same manner [according to the same priorities and practices] as He walked."

Jesus also exemplifies and sets the standard for leadership in the Church (**Matthew 20:25-28**), "Jesus called them [His disciples] to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

Look again at **1Peter 5:4...** We are reminded that the model, the pattern, the attributes of shepherding the flock are exemplified in Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

David, the King of Israel, declares in **Psalms 23:1**, "The Lord is my shepherd." David himself was repeatedly exhorted to shepherd Israel (**2Samuel 5:2; 1Chronicles 11:2**). In **Psalms 80:1**, the writer implores the LORD God, "Oh Shepherd of Israel," and in **verses 18-19** the writer pleads, "Revive us, and we will call upon Your name. O Lord God of hosts, restore us; Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved."

Jesus Christ, God's Son, is not only Lord and Savior, He is (**John 10:11**) "The Good Shepherd" who "lays down His life for the sheep." He also is the one who

saves us (**John 10:27-28**), "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

**Hebrews 13:20-21**, "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

**1Peter 2:25** declares Jesus to be "the Shepherd and Guardian of [our] souls."

**1Peter 5:4** says, "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you [the under-shepherds, the men who served as elders/overseers/shepherds] will receive the unfading crown of [that is] glory."

What does Peter mean by "when Christ appears?" The Bible tells us that the next appearance [Greek lit. means *revealing, manifestation*] of our Lord will be at the end of the Seven-Year Tribulation, at Christ's Second Coming, His return to the earth, this is (**1Peter 5:1**), "the glory that is to be revealed."

What does Peter mean by "the unfading crown of glory." In Peter's day, during the time of Greco-Roman dominion and their favored Olympic Games, instead of trophies being given to the winning contestants, crowns were awarded to the victors.

**1Corinthians 9:24-25**, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."

The wreath talked about in that passage was a crown made from flowers, notice Peter uses the word "unfading" to describe the award of the glory of God in Christ. The main flower used to make the victor's crowns was amaranth. Amaranth (scientifically known as *Amaranthus*, meaning "does not fade") is a perennial plant that can grow up to 3 feet tall with flowers that come in shades ranging from purple, pink, red, white, and yellow. Amaranth is one of the world's oldest cultivated crops and was widely eaten in Central America, ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt, and China.

The flowering plant is a favorite for wreath making because the flowers hold their color and shape for many years once they have fully dried, and so they do not deteriorate or crumble but seem to live forever.

Peter is saying here (**1Peter 5:4**), that the elders who faithfully serve Christ by caring for and watching over God's people, will be rewarded when Christ returns in His glory, the glory that is yet to be revealed (see **Revelation 19:11-16**).

Serving others can be tiring, frustrating, even painful; but it can also be invigorating, rewarding, and joyful. Truth be told, all Christians are to be servants, and in fact, we have been equipped and provisioned in and through God's Word so that we can serve others as we ourselves would want to be treated.

Our priority as God's children, is to serve the Lord, and we do that best by lovingly serving others on God's behalf.

**Matthew 7:12**, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

**Luke 6:31**, "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you."

**James 2:8**, "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well."

One of the Pharisees, a lawyer, asked Jesus (**Matthew 22:37-40**), "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Paul simplified how we all are to live our lives in honorable and praise worthy service to the Lord (**Colossians 3:17, 23-24**), "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

The "reward of the inheritance," what is that?

**Revelation 22:12**, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

What could be better than to hear the glorious welcome from our Lord, as we enter heaven (**Matthew 25:23**), "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master," (**Revelation 21:3-5**), "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the [dwelling] of God is among men, and He will dwell [with] them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be [with] them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"

No wonder the Apostle John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, closed the Book of Revelation with the following (**Revelation 22:20-21**), "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with [you] all. Amen."