

September 7, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Counsel to Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1-4

1. Demonstrate Humility (verse 1).
2. Shepherd the Sheep (verses 2-3).
3. Remember the Reward (verse 4).

Let's begin by reading the first four verses of our text.

1 Peter 5:1-4

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. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

These verses are addressed to the elders of the church. You can see that in the first verse, "I exhort the elders among you." In verse 5, Peter's focus will change. There, he will address the "younger men." In the second half of verse 5, the exhortation will extend to everyone, as Peter writes, "and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." We will get to these next week. But, this morning, we will look at Peter's exhortation to the elders.

In many ways, our text couldn't be more timely. In the life of our church, we have an elder going out today. And, we have an elder coming in today. This is Gordy Bell's last Sunday with us. After church this morning we will be having a reception with he and Ruthie, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, as well as expressing our appreciation for the years of service that he has given to Rock Valley Bible Church. In the future they are looking to attend a church closer to home, as the burden of travel won't be so much for him. This Sunday is also Frank Yonke's first Sunday with us. Frank is on loan from Kishwaukee Bible Church. His goals in Rockford are twofold: to help set in order what remains at Rock Valley Bible Church, and to help appoint elders at Rock Valley Bible Church (in accordance with Titus 1:5). Many of you know Frank. Some of you don't. Today is a good opportunity for you to spend some time with him. If you don't know him, please introduce yourself to him. He will be staying for our lunch together afterwards if you want to spend an extended time with him.

Our text this morning is timely, because 1 Peter 5:1-4 is one of the clearest texts in all of the Bible explaining the duties of an elder. What an appropriate message to preach on a day in which we receive a new elder into our midst. It is good for all of us to be reminded from God's word of His perspective on what an elder in a church ought to be. These words are directly applicable for me. These words are directly applicable for Frank.

Though these words aren't directly applicable to the majority of you in our congregation this morning, they may be applicable to those of you who are aspiring to the office of an elder. Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:1, "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." And I want to encourage you in that work.

As I describe the duties of an elder, you ought to be asking yourself two questions. First of all, are these the sorts of things that I desire? Do I have a desire within me to shepherd the flock of God? Is this a burning passion of my soul? Second, are these the sorts of things that I am doing in some measure now? with my family? or with other men? Part of the process in appointing elders isn't merely to set them before you and say, "Hey, let's start the work." Rather, it's that you are in the process of doing some of that work and the congregation is able to see you do the work and affirm your giftedness and desire in that work. Finally, you are appointed to do that work officially as an elder in the church.

But, there is a third group of people here this morning. It's all of you who are neither elders, nor aspiring elders. There is certainly a measure of application in my message this morning. For you, the application comes primarily by way of help. As you hear what God requires of the elders of a church, you can ask yourself some questions: Am I helping the elders to be all that God calls them to be? Or, am I making their tasks difficult? Am I encouraging them in their duties? Am I standing in the way of their duties? Or, am I a joy to them and making their duties a delight? Do I make myself available to the elders of the church? Or, do I make them come and find me (if they can)?

I do have a Scriptural basis for such words. Hebrews 13:17 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." In other words, if you make the role of the shepherds of the church a delight, it will be profitable for you and for the well-being of your soul. But if you are a grief to those who shepherd your souls, it isn't profitable for you. It won't go well for you. And so, please realize that there is something in today's text for all of us, regardless of your role in this church.

My message has three points this morning. Each of them are in the form of counsel given to shepherds of the church. First off, we we that elders must ...

1. Demonstrate Humility (verse 1).

This counsel comes directly to me. This comes to Frank. This comes to all future elders of Rock Valley Bible Church.

As Peter begins to exhort the elders of the scattered churches, he doesn't pull rank and demand that his instructions for them are to be obeyed because of who he is. He doesn't say, "I'm the great apostle Peter, listen to me!" Rather, he gives three descriptions of himself, none of which attract particular attention to his authority. In this way, I believe that Peter is modeling before us a genuine humility, which is worthy of being followed.

First of all, Peter calls himself, "your fellow elder." That is, Peter identifies himself with the elders to whom he is writing, not as a super apostle or super elder, rather, as a fellow elder. He considers himself to be one of the team, not as one over the team. He doesn't feel that he deserves special treatment. He doesn't say, "I'm your head elder. I'm the one that calls the shots."

Now, Peter could easily have promoted himself here with his title. Peter wasn't afraid of identifying himself as an apostle, one who had been sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, himself. In fact, he begins this epistle by saying, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). It's not that Peter is afraid of using a high title for himself. But, here in the context of leadership, and in the context of counseling other leaders, Peter merely calls himself, "your fellow elder."

I believe that Peter understands leadership. Leadership is not about having power in your control to order people around. Leadership is not about being the ones who sit in the board room approving or dis-approving of the things that go on in the church. Rather, leadership is about being an example for others to follow.

Peter says, "I am your fellow elder." There is something particularly encouraging and comforting about this. He knows of the particular struggles and trials that elders go through as they seek to shepherd churches. He can say, "I have been there. I have done that." He can put his figurative arms around the elders of these scattered churches and say, "I know the task that is set before you. I know it's hardships. I know it's difficulties. I know it's discouragements." Such counsel is a help and a motivation to follow Peter's counsel.

When a former athlete becomes a coach of an athletic team, there is a certain respect that he derives from the players, simply because he has "been there, done that." When a union worker becomes a politician, running for office, there is a credibility that he gains as he knows what life is like in the trenches of the union. When a "hockey mom" is nominated as a vice-presidential candidate, there is something that links her with other "hockey moms." That gives her credibility. Likewise, Peter's description of himself as a "fellow elder" brings a level of credibility to his instructions.

But, I'm calling this a display of humility, because that's where Peter is headed. In verses 5 and 6, he will instruct the entire congregation, "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time." Peter's description of himself in these verses, identifying himself as a "fellow elder" is a demonstration of his humility.

His second description of himself is that he is a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." There's no doubt that Peter witnessed the sufferings of Jesus. He was with Him for three years of His ministry, watching the trials that came upon Him because of the unrepentant Jews (Matt. 23:37-39). He was there with Jesus in the garden when Jesus was sweating drops of blood because of His troubled soul (Matt. 26:38). Peter was there when Jesus was betrayed and arrested and taken off to a late-night trial. Peter was following Him from a distance, warming himself by a fire in the outer court when Jesus was being held trial by the Sanhedrin. He was close enough to the proceedings that he exchanged looks with Jesus after he had denied him three times (Luke 22:62). Surely, as Jesus was suffering upon the cross in that public place, Peter was able to see His suffering. After the resurrection, Peter was able to see and touch the signs of His suffering: the pierced hands and side.

Peter says, "I've seen the sufferings of Christ." But, being a "witness of the sufferings of Christ" is more than merely seeing them. He has also preached about the sufferings of Christ. You simply need to read his sermons in the book of Acts, and he clearly proclaims the crucifixion of Christ. Which is our hope! We hope in a crucified Lord.

At this point, you can easily ask, "Why does Peter mention this?" It's because of the first word in chapter 5, "Therefore." This exhortation to the elders of the churches doesn't come out of nowhere. As I have repeated often, the theme of 1 Peter is, "Suffer Now, Glory Later." These people were experiencing great suffering, as believers in Christ. Peter was counseling them how to handle their suffering.

In fact, we just finished a section of Scripture in which Peter spoke most strongly about the reality of suffering in their lives. He wrote, ...

1 Peter 4:12

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

Suffering is coming. It is a part of the Christian life. Don't be surprised when it comes. The promise that sustains us is the glory on the other end, which is mentioned in verse 13,

1 Peter 4:13

But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

The suffering that you endure will result in glory later. So, (as verses 14-16 say), ...

1 Peter 4:14-16

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

In other words, don't look at the suffering as a bad thing. Rather, look at it as a blessing and as an opportunity in which to glorify God through it. The reality is that suffering is coming.

1 Peter 4:17-19

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

When suffering comes upon a church body, who do you suppose suffers the most? The leaders suffer the most. Whenever I read the stories about the persecuted church, (whether it be in China or Russia or some Islamic nation), it's almost always the leaders of the church who receive the most persecution. They are the ones who are most vocal. You get the leader, and you can control the people.

And here in chapter 5, verse 1, Peter says to the leaders of the church, "I know a thing or two about suffering. I have seen the sufferings of Christ. I have experienced the sufferings of Christ. I am a proclaimer of the sufferings of Christ. I can give you counsel to help you persevere in these times."

Peter can't spend much time talking about the sufferings without bringing in the glory, which comes in the last phrase of verse 1, "and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed." With these words, I think that Peter is setting his heart upon the reward at the end of the day. When we have endured the trials and tribulations of this life, there is glory that awaits us. The only way to properly endure suffering is to have a healthy dose of hope. This is Peter's counsel. I have seen his sufferings and I will enjoy His glory. Not because I'm such a great person who earned it all. Rather, because Christ has saved me by His grace.

In all this, Peter was demonstrating humility. Let's continue to my second point. Not only do elders need to (1) Demonstrate Humility (verse 1), but they also need to ...

2. Shepherd the Sheep (verses 2-3).

This exhortation comes straight from verse 2, "shepherd the flock of God among you." No other image gets to the heart of what it means to be an elder than this imagery used here of a shepherd.

In our day and age, this imagery is a bit foreign to us. I have never met a shepherd before. I have met farmers who have raised sheep. I have known some young adults who have cared for sheep and have brought their sheep to the fair to show them. But, even these people aren't shepherds in the sense that Peter is talking about here.

In the ancient world, shepherds were common. Peter is talking about those who have a flock of sheep, who live with them day after day all day long. The shepherd would lead his flock to the green pastures, where they might graze and be satisfied with the grass they could eat (Ps. 23:2). The shepherd would lead his flock to the water to drink (Ps. 23:2). The shepherd would be with his flock through the night (Luke 2:8). The shepherd would protect the flock from the dangers that would come upon them, such as lions or bears or wolves (1 Sam. 17:34; John 10:12). When one of the sheep stray, the shepherd will leave the 99 and track down the lost sheep and bring him back into the fold (Matt. 18:12-14). Whenever special attention is needed, the shepherd provides the care. This is the imagery that Peter is using here. He says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you."

Now, obviously, Peter isn't talking about real shepherds and real sheep. He's talking about those who shepherd the souls of His people. This use of the shepherding imagery is a very common illustration in the Bible. You can read about shepherds in the Old Testament in passages such as: Jeremiah 23:1-4, Ezekiel 34:1-10, and Zechariah 11:4-18.

It was easy for Peter to use this illustration. The Bible repeatedly uses this imagery to describe the role of elders in the church. And Jesus Himself used this imagery with Peter. (John 21) After Peter had fallen, Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." He then said, "Tend My Lambs." (John 21:15). Later, after asking the same question several times, Jesus told Peter, "Shepherd My Sheep." and "Tend My Sheep" (John 21:16, 17).

The metaphor that Peter had received, he was passing on to other elders. "Shepherd the Flock of God among you." Sadly when the Old Testament Scriptures use this metaphor, it's often a condemnation to the shepherds of Israel for failing in their job. Rather, than feeding the flock, they were feeding themselves (Ezek. 34:2). Rather than gathering the flock, they were scattering the flock (Jer. 23:2). When Jesus walked the earth, he was aware of how the people were "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

But there is hope. Many times, when the Scriptures speak about the worthless shepherds, they also describe the day when He will send a good Shepherd to gather them. Of course, we know that He was prophesying of Jesus, who said, Himself, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Jesus is the picture of the perfect shepherd. The one who is with His sheep. "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). The one who leads His flock. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and

they follow Me" (John 10:27). The one who provides food and drink for His flock. "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believe in Me will never thirst" (John 6:35). The one who will protect the flock. "I give eternal life to [My sheep], and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). The one who cares for His flock. "... casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

This is what God calls the elders of the church to do. Be with the flock, lead the flock, feed the flock, protect the flock, and care for the flock. This takes many different forms and comes in many different ways. One of the ways is right here on Sunday morning, feeding the flock on God through preaching the word. The entire service is also an opportunity to care for the flock through singing praise to God and Scripture readings and prayers and testimonies. Another way takes place in any of the Bible studies that we have. When the word is shared in a more intimate setting, with more particular application. Shepherding the flock takes place through the administration of the church, as shepherds lead the church is a God-glorifying direction. Shepherding takes place through phone calls and visits and emails and meals together. The circumstances surrounding this shepherding activity are numerous. Counseling, giving advice, helping parents, encouraging children, answering questions, praying with others, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep, guiding them through life.

From my experience, I know that my work is never done. I can always make another phone call. I can always write another note. I can always meet with someone else. I can always have another family over. It's a huge task. And I have found it to be a difficult task. I know of my need to depend upon God for accomplishing all of this. I know of my great failures in these things. I know of ways in which I haven't directed people to God. I know of ways in which I haven't been with people enough. I know of ways in which I haven't led well enough. I know of ways in which I haven't been a good example.

So, pray for me. Pray for Frank. Pray for those that God will raise up in our midst to help ease the burden. I am encouraged by the words of Charles Jefferson, a pastor of a church in New York City for forty years. "It is by no means easy for a young man to become a shepherd. And he ought not be discouraged if he cannot become one in a day of a year. An orator he can be without difficulty. A reformer he can become at once. In criticism of politics and society he can do a flourishing business the first Sunday. But a shepherd he can become only slowly, and by patiently traveling the way of the cross." [\[1\]](#)

Now, I want for you to take note of the next phrase in verse 2, "Shepherd the flock of God **among you**." There is a sense of an identified group of people to shepherd.

One of the characteristics of Rock Valley Bible Church over the years has been our lack of formal membership. It's often a question of people who begin coming to the church. They say, "What about membership?" My answer usually goes along these lines. "At this time, we don't have a formal membership process at Rock Valley Bible Church. We have talked about it a bit, but haven't yet implemented anything. I haven't found 'church membership' in the Bible. That's not to say that 'church membership' is wrong. In our case, even without a formal 'church membership' program, it's quite clear as to who is in the church and who isn't in the church. Mostly, the process of 'membership' happens naturally. People come to the church. After they have attended for a few Sundays, I pursue them naturally. Often, we have them over for dinner at our house to get to know them and to hear their testimonies of how they came to faith in Christ. At that time, we talk about the church, our history, our beliefs, our ministries, our vision. I encourage them to be involved in the lives of the people of the church."

This has worked fine for us. It's pretty clear who's a member of Rock Valley Bible Church and who isn't. At times when people leave the church, it's clear that they are leaving. I pursue everyone who leaves, seeking to speak with them.

However, as I have thought in recent days about the work of shepherding this church, I have thought about implementing a program whereby the elders of Rock Valley Bible Church would systematically visit those of the church, getting into your homes to provide pastoral care. I spoke with another pastor recently, who regularly performs elder visits in their church. He and his elders systematically go through the member list and visit the church members to provide pastoral care for them, seeking to know how it is with their souls and pray with them. I have thought about implementing a strategy for doing this here at Rock Valley Bible Church. I think that such a systematic approach would help me (and any future elders) in the shepherding work. It would give some intentionality to the shepherding process.

But, as I have thought about implementing this process, I have thought about how a "membership" process would help in this. Those who would say, "I'm a believer in Christ. I know of my need to identify with a local church. I want to submit myself to those in authority at Rock Valley Bible Church. I want the elders of the church to come into my life and provide oversight of my soul." In this way, you can express your commitment to this local body. In this way, you can provide the elders of Rock Valley Bible Church a way to provide intentional pastoral care for those who are "among us." I'd like to see us as a church head in that direction. I know that it brings more responsibility upon me (and upon any future elders), but I think that it's a way which can help us in being more intentional about shepherding the flock of God among us. That's one of the things that Frank Yonke might be able to help "set in order what remains."

Let's move on to the second phrase in verse 2, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight." Picture with me a shepherd up on a hill, watching over the flock. From his vantage point, he can see the flock as a whole. He can see beyond the flock to where the green pastures are. He can see where the water is. He can see if danger lurks in the distance. Such is the work of elders. They provide "oversight" to the flock.

At this point, it would be good to point out the various names given to elders. Right here in 1 Peter, we find three names that are given to elders that describe their function and their office. First of all, of course, they are identified as "elders." (You can see this in verse 1). Second, their work is that of a shepherd. This is the same word from which we derive the word, "pastor." So, you might equally translate this, "pastor the flock of God among you." Third, their work is that of an overseer. They are told to "exercise oversight." You may also refer to elders as "overseers."

So, elders are pastor are overseers. These are all different names given to the same office. And this comes out in several places throughout the New Testament. One of these places is Acts 20, where Paul came to Miletus to speak with the elders at the church in Ephesus. At the heart of his exhortation to these men was the brief statement, "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" (Acts 20:28). Speaking to the elders, Paul says that these men are "overseers" who are responsible for "shepherding" (or "pastoring") the church. Elders, pastors, overseers are shepherds. You see these words used interchangeably in those who are ultimately responsible for leading the church.

It is interesting to note that when Titus is given a list of the character qualifications that is necessary for those who lead the church, he identifies them as "elders." But, when Timothy is given a similar list, he identifies them as "overseers." It's because the names given all define the man and his ministry. He is an elder, in that he is one who is mature in the faith. He is a shepherd, in that he cares for the flock. He is an overseer, in that he watches over the flock.

Now, when Peter describes how it is that the elders ought to do their work, he puts forth six warnings to them. You can see them there in verses 2 and 3. "(1) Not under compulsion, but (2) voluntarily" "(3) Not for sordid gain, but (4) with eagerness" "(5) Not lording it over those allotted to your charge, but (6) proving to be examples to the flock." I trust that you can see how these six warnings are in couplets. Peter first states the negative and then he follows with the positive instruction after this. Peter puts these warnings in here, for a reason. Every pastor, every shepherd, every elder, is prone to these things. And especially to those who are experiencing difficult times of suffering.

So, let's look at the first one. "Not under compulsion, but voluntarily." The key here is that elders need to do their work, ...

a. Willingly

This exhortation gets to the desires of what you want to do with your life. There are many things that we can do in our lives that are merely obligation. But, being an elder in a church isn't one of them. I go to work because I have to. I clean the dishes because I have to. I pay my taxes, because I have to. Being an elder under compulsion is a recipe for disaster. The work is hard and the rewards are few. And the work will be a burden. But, when there's a passion and a desire, the work will flow willingly.

A great illustration of this took place during my sophomore year in high school. (Some of you know this about me.) I was fifteen years old, going to high school about a quarter-mile away, which meant that I could walk home easily (or, in my case, skateboard). Anyway, I used to go home regularly for lunch. Rather than taking my lunch in the cafeteria, I would quickly run home, grab my lunch and return to school, within an hour's time. Anyway, one day, I went home for lunch and returned to school with a bunch of people saying, "Congratulations Steve! Congratulations Steve!" At first, I had no idea what they were talking about. But, I soon learned the reason why I was receiving so much congratulations.

On that particular day, there were elections for the student counsel. At lunch, my "friends" had come up with an idea of seeing if they could elect their own candidate by a write-in vote. As they were figuring out who they might want to write-in, they chose me, because I was gone and couldn't object to it. Now, you have to understand, serving in the student counsel was really one of the furthest things from my mind. It's not that student counsel elections were far from my mind, because signs were all over the school, requesting votes on that day. But, I wasn't running for any office. I didn't really have much of a desire for any office. But, when my friends elected me for the position of student counsel vice president of the sophomore class, I decided to take the position.

And do you know what I found out that year? I didn't want to be involved in student counsel. We had a ton of meetings. We did a bunch of busy work. I was assigned a bit of responsibility that I didn't really want to handle. The year was drudgery. Needless to say, I didn't run for student counsel the next year. It just wasn't me. I had no heart for it.

In the same way here, Peter says that elders shouldn't serve "under compulsion." That's why the nominating and voting process doesn't work for elders in the church. You may well get an elder, who didn't really want to do the job, but was nominated, and then voted in. But, really, the work wasn't desired. So, you say, how do you become an elder at Rock Valley Bible Church? Your first step is to come and talk with me or Frank. We will dialogue with you, help to evaluate your character with you, provide you with any needed training you might need, watch you and observe you. I've had some conversations with some of you about these things.

In recent days, I have put together a preliminary sketch of specific, detailed plan in identifying, training, and appointing elders. I'm hoping that Frank will help me finalize the process to help give direction to these things. Elders need to shepherd the flock, willingly.

Let's look at the second warning. Elders must serve, ...

b. Sacrificially

Peter writes that the shepherding work must be done, "Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness."

The idea here is that the elder/pastor/shepherd shouldn't be into his work for what he can get out of it. Rather, he must go into the task thinking that it's something that will cost him. When Paul was speaking with the elders at Ephesus, he gave a good example of this. He said, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course

and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). In other word, "My life is nothing. I've given it to the Lord, and I will joyfully serve Him with all that I have."

That's the perspective than any elder/pastor/overseer must have. Sadly, this isn't the case with many. There are many who are in the ministry for what they can get out of it. Peter talks about such false teachers in 2 Peter, chapter 2. He talks about those who are in it for the sexual favors (2 Peter 2:14), for the money (2 Peter 2:3, 15), or for the power (2 Peter 2:14).

The Pharisees of old were in the ministry for what they could get out of it. Jesus rebuked them for loving to "stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men" (Matt. 6:5). Jesus rebuked them for attempting to place themselves in places of honor (Luke 14:7). They loved being called, "Rabbi" and "teacher" and "father" (Matt. 23:7-9). But, such should not be the expectation of a shepherd of God's flock. He shouldn't be in it for financial gain. He shouldn't be in it for power. He shouldn't be in it for himself. Rather, he should be in it for what he can give.

Now, please don't get me wrong. There is reward in this. (We will see this especially in verse 4). But, the reward doesn't come in the ways that you might expect. The reward comes in the giving. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). There is a blessing in giving. There is a blessing in giving to others financially. There is a blessing in giving your life to help others. This is the gain of an elder who does his job well. It's not financial gain. It's not power and influence. Rather, it's the blessing of God upon his life.

John Piper's comments here are good. He writes, '...

God loves a cheerful pastor. Peter does not admonish pastors to simply do their work, come what may. Perseverance through the hard times is good. It is essential! But it is not all that is commanded of pastors. We are commanded to enjoy our work! The impulse should come gladly from within, not oppressively from without. Parental pressure, congregational expectations, fear of failure or divine censure--these are not good motives for staying in the pastoral ministry. There should be an inner willingness. We should want to do the ministry. It should be our joy. Joy in ministry is a duty!--a light burden and an easy yoke. [\[2\]](#)

Elders need to shepherd the flock, willingly, sacrificially, (and thirdly) ...

c. Lovingly

I get this from the phrase that Peter uses, "not lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

Peter learned his lesson during the days he spent with Jesus. When there was a discussion among the disciples about who was the greatest, Jesus said, ...

Mark 10:42-45

You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But 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 slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

In other words, to be a great leader, you don't need great power. To be a great leader in the church, you don't need to exert your authority and demand of others that the work get done. Rather, you are to serve, as an example for others to see. It's right here where the world's leadership methods can be so different than the way that leaders in the church are to conduct themselves. Great leaders in business are often hard and forceful and strong and lead with intimidation. You work for them, not because you really want to, but because you are afraid of what will happen if you don't do your job correctly. This may get results in the world. But, this doesn't get results in the church. It's not God's way.

Results in the church come when its leaders give themselves completely to the shepherding work, by laying down their own will and giving themselves to the people they shepherd. Isn't this how the church was started in the first place? Our leader and Lord gave himself completely for us. He left the throne of God above to come and sacrifice all for us. He gave His life for us. He died, that we might live.

Elders are to do likewise. They are to lay down their lives for the sheep. They aren't lords who merely sit up here and tell

others what to do. No, they are to be in the trenches serving among the people. And thereby demonstrating their love for the people. The church prospers when its leaders demonstrate themselves to be examples for all to follow. Their lives are such that people want to follow their lives. Their love to Christ is such that people want to imitate their example. Their families are such that people would long to have a family like theirs. They prove themselves to be examples, worthy of imitation. This is what Paul said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

So, how are you doing? Are you helping the elders to accomplish their roles in the church? Are you helping them to do the ministry willingly, lovingly, sacrificially? (cf. Heb. 13:15).

Quickly, let's turn our attention to our final point this morning.

3. Remember the Reward (verse 4).

This comes from verse 4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Once again, Peter focuses our attention upon our future, beyond this life. We can endure the sufferings of this present life because we know of the glory that awaits us. That was Peter's idea way back in chapter 1, in which he described the inheritance that all believers have in Christ. We have an inheritance which is "imperishable and undefiled and unfading" (1:4). Our anticipation of future glory is what allows us to "greatly rejoice" even when we are "distressed by various trials" (1:6).

At the very end of Peter's epistle, he will say the same thing. 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." "You will suffer for a little while, but then, you will enjoy the eternal glory in Christ."

Now, what's true in one measure of all believers, is especially true in the case of those who have carried out their pastoral duties well. They will receive an "unfading crown of glory." And the end of his ministry, Paul was anticipating this crown. He wrote to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Now, it's well nigh impossible to know exactly what this unfading crown of glory is. It's also difficult to know how it will differ from the glory received by those in the congregation, or whether it is different at all. When Paul was anticipating his crown of righteousness, he made mention that it was also to be received by "all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

I merely trust that the Lord will sort it all out in the end, when we enter into the joy of our master. As we close this morning, I have one more observation. Notice here how Peter describes the return of Jesus. He uses the title of "Chief Shepherd." In this way, he puts all elders in their proper place. Because all shepherds of His church are mere under-shepherds. Would the truth be known, Jesus is the "senior pastor" of Rock Valley Bible Church. As head of the church, He is the one who ultimately will shepherd the flock of God. It's His church. He's the one who purchased it. We are merely instruments in His hands, carrying out His will.

Our hope in building the church is not in us. It's Him. Where the undershepherds fail, Jesus will succeed.

Let me close with a benediction, "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 Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 7, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Charles Jefferson, The Minister as Shepherd

[2] John Piper, Desiring God, p. 102.