

Shepherds of His Sheep

1 Peter 5:1-7

Introduction – Persecutions and hard trials put great pressure on a church, and this is especially felt by its leadership. Jesus warned of being led by hirelings who flee when the wolf comes (John 10:11-15). By their example and instruction, godly shepherds imitate their Chief Shepherd in leading the flock in faithfulness. A faithful church will be led by elders who will lead and be followed in a particular way.

Shepherds of a Flock (vv1-4) – Peter continues his argument begun in 4:12. A well cared for flock can endure a great deal of hard providences. Elders, in a very real way, provide a means of grace to the corporate church – not as automatic, mechanical dispensers, but nonetheless providers to the sheep of God as a shepherd to his flock.

Peter is One of Them – While Peter also identifies himself with the qualifications of an apostle (v1), he exhorts them as a fellow elder, one whom had been exhorted just the same (John 21:15). Peter does not identify himself as the head of the church, but leaves that title to the Chief Shepherd. We should do the same when asked, “Who is your senior pastor?”

The Shepherd-Picture – Elders are described as shepherds. Immediately we see that elders are to be like Christ, the Chief Shepherd (v4 and 2:25). The motif of God-appointed shepherd-leaders runs throughout the scriptures. Moses, a near-ruler alongside Pharaoh, becomes a shepherd, Joshua is appointed as a shepherd (Num 27:12-23), and King David is a shepherd. Ezekiel bemoans the lack of faithful shepherds (Ezek 34) and Jesus comes as the Good Shepherd.

Three Temptations (vv2-3) – (1) Elders should not serve under compulsion, and Peter may very well have the oncoming persecution in mind. (2) Elders must not serve for dishonest gain, for injured sheep are an easy prey. Instead, as a shepherd to his sheep, elders are to be lead-servants. (3) Elders must not use their position as a place for tyranny, but teach submission by being submissive examples to their Chief Elder. The result must be winsome and effective lives and teaching that instruct men and women in the Christian life.

Rewards (v4) – But elders are to serve with an eye to a prize, just as Jesus did. There is nothing wrong with obedience and sacrifice motivated by future rewards.

Words to the Young Flock (v5) – Now he addresses ‘younger people’ and tells them how to live towards their elders. God always commands to our weaknesses. Temptation to disrespect the older generation has always been an issue. It is only in our post-60’s culture where it has been tolerated by the older generation. Teenagers particularly must submit to the elders, and more particularly to their ‘closest elders’, their parents. Young people should hear the warning clearly from the Lord – “God opposes the proud”.

Submission All Around – Yet, we must teach our children by example, and they should witness a church full of submission, service and humility. It should show up particularly in how wives speak to husbands, how the congregation follows the elders, how citizens obey their government, and generally how we all consider the other one more important than ourselves.

Gospel Humility (vv6-7) – There is a faithful way to submit to God’s sovereign plan for you that produces perfect peace. It is humility filled with good news.

“Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...” – An arrogant man gets all puffed up with pride when things go well, and demands better treatment when things go poorly. Self-pity is simply arrogance turned on its head; a man full of self-pity covets what he doesn’t have, but like the proud man continues to stare at himself. A truly humble man is not thinking about himself. He is not thinking about being humble. He is taking a great interest in what God is doing and in what his fellow man is saying.

“...that He may exalt you in due time...” – The foundation of gospel humility is this: God is God and God is good. The fruit of that kind of humility is not moroseness, but glad-hearted expectation, a song of thankfulness for what is to come.

“...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you...” – If you do not believe in the absolute sovereignty of God, you will never really pray on your knees, you will only worry. And when you get up, there will be no release from the burden. Here is a grand example of where your theology really matters.

The Chief Shepherd Does Care For You (Matt 6:25-34) – These words of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, need to be repeated and lived out in the lives of your shepherds here. Otherwise, like manure in the soil, worry in the soul (and especially in the midst of suffering, hard providences, and persecution) will be strong fertilizer for so many other sins of unbelief – covetousness, bitterness, stealing, etc.

Simple Applications – Elders: shepherd the flock. Pray for your elders and submit to them in particular as we all submit to one another in true, glad-hearted, humility. Put your theology to work to rid your soul of worry and believe the promises of Your Shepherd – He cares for you.