

An Urgent Call to Shepherd God's Flock

Detailed Outline

Part 3 of 5

II. Peter's Charge to the Elders (v. 2) (cont.)

C. The Church is God's flock.

Since the elders are to "shepherd" the local church, those they tend are figuratively called "the flock [*poimnion*] of God among you." What makes this flock special is that it is God's flock. The flock metaphor signifies the Church's true ownership and recognizes its dependence and need for feeding, protection, and care.

1. Ownership

- a) As Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, this flock is the one "He [Christ] purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders must never forget that the flock is not their own.
- b) They should never be indifferent toward a single one of the sheep. The sheep are of immense value to God because of the price paid for them. It is a great honor to be under-shepherds of God's blood-bought flock. Do you see it that way?
- c) Cranfield draws out the implications of this truth when he writes,
"A church that could be ours would be only a false church. So the sheep are not ours for us to use or misuse as we like. If we lose one, we lose another's property, not our own; and He is not indifferent to what becomes of His flock." – Charles Cranfield

2. Dependence

- a) The Bible teaches that people are like sheep (1 Peter 2:25), and sheep cannot be left unattended. Their well-being depends on a great deal of care and attention.
- b) As God's sheep, Christian people need to be fed God's Word and to be protected from wolves in sheep's clothing. They need continuous encouragement, comfort, guidance, prayer, and correction.
- c) Elders, you are needed. The people need you to do the job that the Holy Spirit has called you to do – to shepherd them effectively. Don't let them down. Give your life, your time, your energy, and your efforts for the sheep. Give them your all.

D. Exercising Oversight

1. Following the imperative command to shepherd God's flock, Peter further describes the elders' duty: "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight." This word is the verbal form of the noun, "overseer."

2. The terms shepherding and overseeing are often closely associated because they are similar in concept. In this passage, overseeing is equivalent to shepherding.
 - a) Shepherding is the figurative expression, while overseeing is the literal term, which can be used to clarify the first.
 - b) To shepherd the flock entails oversight--the overall supervision and watchful care of the flock.

III. Peter's Call to Shepherd God's Flock in God's Way (vv. 2-3)

God is preeminently concerned about the motives, attitudes, and methods of those who lead his people, so Peter considers the attitudes or motives that should or should not characterize the elders to be very important. Therefore, he carefully describes how the elders are to serve.

A. "Not Under Compulsion, but Willingly, As God Would Have You"

1. God doesn't want reluctant, unwilling shepherds to care for his people, so Peter warns against an elder serving "under compulsion."
 - a) If a man serves as an elder because his wife or friends pressure him to serve, or because he is trapped by circumstances, or because no one else will do the work, he is serving "under compulsion."
 - b) Lenski captures the spirit of Peter's thought well when he says elders are not to serve "like drafted soldiers but like volunteers."
2. In contrast to serving under compulsion, Peter emphatically says that elders are to shepherd the flock "freely," "willingly," and "voluntarily." Those who oversee the church "voluntarily" do so because they freely choose to serve. It is what they want to do.
 - a) The willing spirit that Peter speaks of is "according to the will of God" (literally, "according to God"). Glad, voluntary service is God's standard. It is the way God expects things to be done. God is not a reluctant, unwilling shepherd. He cares for his sheep gladly, willingly, freely, and graciously. In the same way that "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), he loves cheerful, willing elders.
 - b) This motivation comes from the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 20:28. When the Holy Spirit moves a person to desire eldership, he gives the motivation, energy and desire.

B. "Not for Shameful Gain, but Eagerly"

Peter next addresses what Cranfield terms "the spirit of hirelings." This is a big problem worldwide.

1. I have collected over the years many newspaper articles about the Lord's servants stealing or misappropriating money.
 - a) This is why, whenever money is handled, it must be done by a group of people and accountability, open to the church. Even the best of people are tempted to steal.

- b) Example: one pastor was caught playing golf every week and charging it to the church's credit card. When he was caught doing this, he said it was ministry he was doing with other men. The problem was no one knew the money had been appropriated to this so-called ministry. There are many other ways people can misappropriate the Lord's money and excuse petty theft.
2. In contrast, Peter describes the right spirit in which to shepherd God's flock as "eagerly." The word means "readily," "zealously," and "enthusiastically." "Eagerness" emphasizes, even more than the term "voluntarily," personal desire and passion. It is this kind of eagerness--a strong desire and motivation--that is endorsed by the "trustworthy statement" of 1 Timothy 3:1.
- a) Eager elders are driven to care for the sheep. The sheep are their life, their chief concern. Hence, they are not concerned about the personal sacrifice they make or their own financial gain.
 - b) Like Paul, who at times provided his own income through tent making, they gladly serve without pay or recognition (Acts 20:33-35). They go beyond minimal duty, self-interest, and money. They love to shepherd God's people. They are eager to do the work of an elder.