

An Urgent Call to Shepherd God's Flock

Detailed Outline

Part 5 of 5

"And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:4-5 ESV)

IV. Peter's Promise of Future Rewards for Elders (v. 4)

A. The Chief Shepherd

Peter appropriately calls Jesus Christ the "Chief Shepherd." According to the New Testament there is only "one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16) and Jesus Christ is that one, incomparable, irreplaceable Shepherd. Someday he will return in all his glory to take his flock to be with him forever. At that time, the "Chief Shepherd" will fully reward his under-shepherds.

1. The imagery of the "Chief Shepherd" or "Arch Shepherd" (*archipoimenos*) emphasizes Christ's relationship to all other shepherds. Because he is "Chief," all other shepherds are his under-shepherds.
2. As under-shepherds, all elders are under the authority and rule of the Chief Shepherd. Thus, the elders' shepherding work must be done in complete agreement with his ways and teaching. And that is just what we learned in the above verses.
 - a) Like their loving Chief Shepherd, shepherding elders must shepherd the flock eagerly and willingly, as models of godly disposition.
 - b) Shepherding elders are not free to speak or lead the people in any way they wish, for they must answer to the Chief Shepherd. "Christian leadership is thus a sharing in the leadership of Christ under his direction."
3. What could be more encouraging to faithful shepherds who face many heartaches, problems, trials, and persecutions than to look forward to Christ's return as the "Chief Shepherd" and to share in his divine glory? When elders think of Christ as "Chief Shepherd," their present work is enhanced and his return becomes even more personal.

B. The Unfading Crown of Glory

1. Peter states that upon Christ's return the faithful elders will receive an "unfading crown of glory."
 - a) In this context, "crown" is used symbolically to represent reward or special honor. The reward is for faithful, honorable achievement as under-shepherds of God's flock.
 - b) This crown is unlike any earthly crown made of precious metal or ivy because it is "unfading." It will never wither like a laurel wreath or tarnish like gold.

2. The reason for this crown's unfading quality is that the material used to make this crown is divine, heavenly glory. The adjective "glory" tells us of what the crown consists.
 - a) In Greek, "glory" is a genitive of apposition, meaning that the crown consists of glory. The glory is the reality, and the crown is the metaphor.
 - b) This glory is Christ's glory that will be displayed at his appearing. He will give the "crown of glory" to his under-shepherds.
3. What a time of victory, vindication, and joy Christ's appearance will bring to lowly, unnoticed elders who have faithfully shepherded God's flock!
 - a) Hard-working, selfless shepherds may not have many earthly goods to show for a lifetime of toil, but some day the Chief Shepherd will come and fully reward his under-shepherds.
 - b) Their work will no longer go unnoticed or unappreciated, for he will reward them publicly before the hosts of heaven. He will bestow on them heavenly honor and glory. All elders are to keep their eyes steadfastly fixed on his appearing, for reward day is coming!

V. Peter's Exhortation for Mutual Humility (v. 5)

A. The Call to Submission

1. Peter has just exhorted the elders not to lord it over the flock. Now he feels compelled to instruct the younger members to subject themselves to the elders.
2. The younger adult members who are diligently working – eager for change and further service – are the ones who are most likely to conflict with the church elders.
 - a) If the eldership is stagnant or ineffective, the younger adult members are the ones who are most likely to be discontent.
 - b) Such younger people are often (but not necessarily) junior leaders, ready to learn from and assist those directing the church. But their very readiness for service and commitment can make them impatient with the leaders, who either due to pastoral wisdom or the conservatism that often comes with age are not ready to move as quickly or as radically as they are.
 - c) It would be quite fitting to address such people with an admonition to be subject to their elders. Indeed, particularly in a time of persecution their willingness to take radical stands without considering the consequences could endanger the church.
3. The best training a Christian young person can have in preparation for church leadership is to first learn to submit to those in spiritual leadership. A spiritually keen young man can gain invaluable wisdom and leadership skills through the experience of older, godly men, even if they are not paragons of leadership excellence (which most are not).

B. The Call to Humility

1. Knowing the ever-lurking potential for disagreement, fighting, and division between all parties in the local church, accentuated by the pressures of a hostile society, Peter offers the best possible counsel. This counsel is both for the junior leaders and for the elders. Elders are included in the command to wear the proper “clothing” when gathering together with others:

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”” (1 Peter 5:5)

2. Only when everyone wears the garments of humility--elders, young men, women, and deacons--will peace and unity prevail.
3. This is excellent advice for all churches, for all elders, all younger, junior leaders. It is not possible to live and work together without humility. And we should be very concerned about the attitude of humility because of the frightening statement, that God opposes and resists the proud and his grace comes to the humble.

“What a blessed influence is the holy character and conduct of Christian elders calculated to diffuse through the church.” – John Brown