

An Urgent Call to Shepherd God's Flock

Detailed Outline

Part 1 of 5

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight." (1 Peter 5:1-2a ESV)

Introduction

A. So often, Peter is over-shadowed by Paul. We don't even think of Peter's instruction to the elders.

1. But may I remind you that the first church was held together, taught, and protected by Peter and the eleven other apostles? Peter was a great man and a gifted teacher and leader.
2. If we want to understand eldership as God intends, we need Peter as much as we need Paul. And we need Luke's teaching in Acts, and the teaching of James, who was also an apostle.

B. Background

1. Up until this point in the letter, Peter has been addressing the suffering, persecuted churches. He has told them how they are to handle suffering and persecution in a hostile world. Now he turns to the leaders of all the congregations. They are usually the first to suffer persecution or be targeted by the opposition.
2. Peter is writing to many churches throughout northern Asia Minor. He assumes there is a body of elders in each church. This is the consistent pattern throughout the NT – a body of elders in each congregation.
3. When believers are suffering and under pressure, the leaders of the church make all the difference. In times of persecution or trouble, leaders are most needed to keep the flock united, encouraged, rested, and growing.

I. Peter — an Elder — to Fellow Elders (v. 1)

A. A Fellow Elder

1. By identifying himself as a "fellow elder," Peter establishes a special bond of affection with the church elders. He creates a sense of collegiality and mutual regard.
 - a) At one time Peter was a local church elder. He served with eleven other men during turbulent times in the church in Jerusalem.

- b) At the time he wrote 1 Peter, Peter was an active shepherd caring for many churches. Hence, Peter has every right to call himself a “fellow elder.”
- 2. As a fellow elder, Peter sympathizes with the problems and dangers the Asian elders face.
 - a) He knows spiritual warfare and the practical problems of shepherding a church.
 - b) He serves daily on the front lines of battle. He knows how difficult the work is and is well-acquainted with the many pitfalls, abuses, and temptations of leadership.
 - c) He, too, feels the daily pressures and strains of pastoral responsibility.

B. A Witness of the Sufferings of Christ

- 1. The “sufferings of Christ” to which Peter testifies are the sufferings common to all believers as a result of confessing Christ and living in a Christ-like manner in an unjust, sinful world.
- 2. It is similar to 2 Corinthians 1:5, where Paul talks of sharing in Christ’s sufferings. Peter himself will face death soon, so he is a fellow sufferer.
- 3. This phrase could mean, however, that Peter witnessed the many sufferings of Christ over a period of two years from his opponents and ending at the cross.

C. A Partaker in the Glory to be Revealed

- 1. The future glory that Peter shares with the Asian elders is the joyous anticipation of the glory that will be revealed when Christ returns.
- 2. In the same way they have shared in Christ’s sufferings, so, too, they will share in the glory to come. This is a very encouraging promise (1 Peter 1:7, 11; 4:13).

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

A. Do all that a shepherd should do.

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.” Peter exhorts the elders to be what good shepherds should be, or, as one commentator says, “do everything that shepherding requires.” Peter’s charge encompasses the full shepherding responsibility of feeding, folding, protecting, and leading.

- 1. Peter knows people and the common temptations leaders face. He knows how often leaders:
 - a) Fail to be alert,
 - b) Do not push themselves to grow and change,
 - c) Get preoccupied with self-interests,
 - d) Are passive in their work,
 - e) Are minimalists,
 - f) Fail to be the kind of leaders that connect with the people,
 - g) Are not hands-on shepherds.

2. Reality is sad.
 - a) The Galatian elders and the Ephesian elders all failed to guard the church. False teachers entered in with minimal resistance.
 - b) The religious leaders of Jesus' day failed the people. In Mark 6, when Jesus saw the people, He said they were like sheep without a shepherd. And He began to teach them. The problem was, the religious leaders had failed to shepherd the people with good teaching.
3. What Peter said needs to be said today. There is always this problem of elders not doing their job as they should. Do the job. Be effective. Be diligent. Be skilled. Know what you are doing.
 - a) On the authority of the apostle Peter, I say to you: Be everything that a shepherd should be to the people. Be like the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. When he saw the people, he felt compassion and taught them many things (Matt. 14).
 - b) These are the words of our Lord to Peter 35 years before: "Shepherd my sheep," and "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-19).
 - c) Lord loved the church and gave himself for her (Eph. 5:25).