

Portrait Of A Pastor

1 Peter 5:1-4

Pastor John Miller

I'm going to read these four verses, and I want you to follow with me, 1 Peter 5:1. Peter says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed,"—and here's the command—"Feed the flock of God which is among you." We'll come back to that, but that phrase, "Feed the flock of God," is shepherd the flock or pastor the flock. Now he says, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 5 And when the chief Shepherd"—that's our Lord Jesus Christ—"shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Verse 2, shepherd "the flock of God," is the dominant theme of this passage. The word "shepherd," as I pointed out, means to pastor the sheep or the flock of God. It's interesting that we as God's people are likened unto sheep. Do you know that sheep are the dumbest animal on planet earth? This is not flattering. The NFL has the Tigers, the Jaguars, the Bears, the Lions, the Rams, and all these great names for the football teams. Have you ever seen an NFL team called the Sheep? No, because sheep are helpless and defenseless, dirty, and dumb. They don't know how to find their way home. When a sheep goes off from the flock, it gets lost. It can't find its way. It speaks of our great need and dependence on a shepherd.

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd as it says in this verse, verse 4, but pastors are what we call undershepherds. This church is a flock, and Jesus Christ is our Shepherd. Amen? But He appoints men over the flock to be undershepherds, accountable to Him, serving Him, and teaching and feeding people the Word of God, to be the shepherds of the flock. Sheep need to be fed, sheep need to be led, sheep need to be protected, so God raises up men after His own heart to shepherd the flock of God. The church today needs godly pastors who will feed the church and feed the flock of God.

In verses 1-4 we have Peter talking to pastors. What he does, he gives us some of the qualities that are important for a good, godly pastor; so we're going to paint a picture or a portrait. The three points I want to point out about pastors from this text are certainly not exhaustive. We could go to the pastoral epistles. You know that 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are actually entire books of the New Testament written to pastors. Timothy was a pastor; Titus was a pastor. It's all about pastoring in the church, and it's such an important part of our New Testament. This section is all about being a pastor and the qualities of a good, godly pastor. There'll be three of them, and as I said, it's not by any means exhaustive. The list could be quite long. We could actually do a series on being a pastor.

I've been a pastor now for about 52 years, and I just have a great love for other pastors and other men in the ministry because I know the challenges and the hardships and the difficulties that they face in ministry.

What are the qualities that make for a strong and healthy pastor or shepherd? There are three of them. First, if you're taking notes, is a personal experience with Christ. It's kind of a good idea—don't you think—if the pastor knows the Lord, that the pastor has a close and intimate, living, vital relationship with Jesus. This is found in verse 1. Go back there with me. Peter says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness"—notice that—"a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker"—that's that experience with—"the glory that shall be revealed."

We first see the recipients of this charge, and I want to point these out to you. Elders are mentioned twice in verse 1, "The elders which are among you," notice it's in the plural, "who am also an elder," in verse 1. The word "elder" is a word that's used for pastor. This is a synonym. It's the same individual. When you hear the word "elder"... and there's a lot of confusion in the church today about this, when you hear the word "elder" or "pastor," it's the same individual.

Why do we have different titles for the pastor? Because it conveys different things about the pastor. What does "elder" convey? The word "elder," by the way, is from the Greek word translated "elder," it's the word *presbýteros*. We get our word Presbyterian from it. It means a mature individual. If you have a pastor, you want him to be a mature individual. Now, there's no age limit to when you can be a pastor. I started pastoring in my early twenties, but you should be at least a mature individual. When you read the qualifications for a pastor found in 1 Timothy 3, and in Titus 1, it says that they are "Not a novice,"—not be newly planted—"lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It's a dangerous thing to take a young convert or a new believer and place him in a place of spiritual leadership in a church. They can easily be "... lifted up with pride,"—and they can—"fall into the condemnation of the devil." It's the Greek word *presbýteros*, where we get our word "elder" from, and it conveys spiritual maturity.

The second phrase that's used to describe these individuals, and I've already hinted at it, verse 2, is the phrase, "Feed the flock of God which is among you." That word "feed" is actually shepherd, and the word "shepherd" means pastor. They're all referring, again, to the same individual. What does this convey? And we'll talk about it more in just a moment, it conveys that a pastor is a shepherd, and a shepherd's primary job and responsibility is to feed the sheep.

What would you think of a shepherd who didn't feed his sheep? Literal shepherd, but never fed his sheep? It wouldn't be a very good shepherd, right? The number one calling of a pastor is to feed the sheep, to feed the flock of God. You can be a teacher and not be a pastor, but you can't be a pastor without being a teacher. I hear people say, "We got a pastor, and he's a really nice guy. He comes to all our potlucks, he hangs out with us, and he's really nice, a jolly fellow, but he can't teach the Bible." Well, if he can't teach the Bible, then he shouldn't be a pastor. It's one of the gifts that God gives to that individual who is teaching the Bible, to shepherd the flock; and everything the pastor does is through the Word of God—leads, protects, feeds, watches over the flock by using the staff, which is God's Word. That's the same individual.

The third phrase in verse 2 is found in that word "oversight." You have the word "elder" in verse

1; you have the word “feed” in verse 2, means pastor, shepherd; and then the word “oversight.” The word “oversight” is the word episkopé ÒÀ we get our word Episcopalian from. It literally means bishop or oversight or overseer. Sometimes the phrase is overseer, sometimes it’s bishop, but I point this out to you because it’s important. Every time you find one of these words, it’s the same individual. There are only two offices in the church, and it shouldn’t be too hard for us to understand that. The first office is that of an elder, pastor, or bishop. That’s one person. The second office is that of a deacon. There’s only the two offices in the church—a pastor, who is also called an elder or a bishop or an overseer, and the deacon. That word “deacon” comes from the Greek word diakoné ÒÀ which means servant. It’s a man who serves in the church.

I probably shouldn’t say this, but I’m going to say it anyway. In the New Testament I think it’s very clear that this office is only to be filled by a man. Anytime I do that, somebody gets mad at me or upset with me or leaves the church, but I’m not going to compromise my conviction that I believe God calls men to be pastors and God calls men to be the deacons of the church. Does that mean women can’t serve? No. Does that mean women can’t teach the Bible? No. Does that mean women don’t have ministries? No. But these two offices are to be filled by men in the church.

It says in 1 Timothy, “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work,” and first on the list should be, “ . . . the husband of one wife,” that’s kind of a hard qualification for a woman to fulfill, “ . . . the husband of one wife.” It means literally a one-woman man, and it describes the character of a man who’s called to be a pastor.

Another problem we have in the church universal today, too, is that we don’t require the qualities found in the Bible to be required for men who pastor a church. We compromise that. We lower the standards. We put them in a place of position of leadership because of their personality or because of their influence or because of their giftedness rather than the calling of God, which is so important. So, one individual—elder, pastor, bishop, or overseer. Episkopé Ò speaks of his responsibility to oversee the church, to oversee the ministries of the church.

Peter then identifies himself there in verse 1. He says, “ . . . who am also an elder,” so “I am an elder, writing to the elders,” verse 1. It’s interesting that Peter did not mention his apostleship, neither did Peter mention that, “I am the Pope, and you must do as I say.” I know that the Roman Catholic Church believes that Peter was the first pope, but there’s no indication of that in the Scriptures. Peter says, “I am an elder, writing to elders,” and he doesn’t come on even with his apostolic authority, he comes in humbly as one of them who is called by God to shepherd the flock or to feed the flock of God.

Notice he was also not only an elder, but he was a witness, verse 1. It says in verse 1, “ . . . and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” He says two things about himself. First, he says, “I’m an elder.” Secondly, he says, “I’m a witness.” The word “witness” is the Greek word mártys. We get our word martyr from it. The word literally didn’t originally mean in its etymology that you died or that you were put to death for

your faith, it meant that you witnessed or you testified. If you witnessed or testified, you could end up being martyred, but it basically just meant a witness or a testifier.

Notice what he witnessed, verse 1, two things, “. . . the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” This is where I get the idea behind this first point, a personal experience with Christ, “. . . a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed,” and “. . . a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” Peter saw Jesus suffer. Peter saw Jesus on the cross. He was there in the Garden of Gethsemane and saw His agony, but he also—this is what intrigues me in verse 1—he was “. . . a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed,” future tense. He experienced the glory that we’re going to see and experience when Jesus Christ comes back. When he says, “. . . shall be revealed,” I believe he’s referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

When was Peter a partaker “. . . of the glory that shall be revealed”? I think the most likely explanation for that is what we call the Mount of Transfiguration—when Jesus took Peter, James, and John, He went up onto a high mountain, and He was transfigured before them. You know the story. What Jesus was doing on that mountain was pulling back the veil of His humanity and allowing His deity to shine forth, and they saw His glory. They were sleeping, they woke up, and Jesus was in His glorified state. What a mountain experience that must’ve been because not only did they have Jesus, Peter, James, and John were there, but two other guys showed up, Moses and Elijah. I don’t know how he knew who they were. Maybe they had a name tag, “Hi, my name is Moses.” Can you imagine? You talk about men on the mountain.

Our men were up at the retreat last weekend on the mountain, and they had a blessed time. Can you imagine, “Man, we’re going to have a men’s retreat. Jesus is going to show up. We’re going to have Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John.” What an experience that was, and what a powerful impression it made upon Peter’s life. By the way, one of the things conveyed in that transfiguration was Jesus was trying to fix in their minds that suffering and the cross leads to glory—first we have the cross, then we have the crown, that suffering would lead to glory. That’s where they were going to go, but they were going to have to suffer first. Peter’s powerful, intimate, transforming experience with Christ—saw Him suffer, saw the glory that will be revealed. By the way, that’s what we look forward to. Amen? We look forward to when the Lord comes back and we will be transformed with Him. So, we need a personal experience to be a pastor of a church.

The second quality of a true pastor is a pastor’s heart for Christ’s sheep. A pastor should love sheep. It’s kind of silly to think of being a pastor and you don’t like sheep. Why are you pastoring, if you don’t like sheep? Notice in verse 2, we already pointed it out, pastors are to do what? This is, by the way, an imperative, “Feed the flock of God which is among you,” you are with them, they’re among you, you’re among them. You’re pastoring the church, you’re to feed the flock of God. How does a man know he’s called to pastor? He must be called of God; he must be gifted by God to feed, to shepherd the flock. Pastoral ministry is not an occupation of your own choosing. Pastoral ministry must be a call from God. You can’t just say, “Well, I need a job. I think being a pastor sounds pretty good. You only work one hour a week. The pay is

good, easy job, so I'll be a pastor."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in his book *Lectures To My Students* talks about the call to ministry, and he says that if you can do anything other than pastor, do it. You only pastor if you can't do anything but that because of the compulsion and the calling and the burden from God to be a pastor.

I remember so well as a young man beginning to sense and feel that God was calling me to pastor. It was just like God spoke to my heart, "This is what I called you to do," and I devoted myself at an early age to that, and I've never gone in a different direction because I believe that God's called me to be a pastor. I'll pastor as long as He's called me to do that, until He takes me home or tells me otherwise. It's a call from God, and God gives you the gift to be the pastor. So, called to "Feed,"—or to shepherd—"the flock of God."

How is that done? How does the pastor feed the flock? Obviously by teaching and preaching the Bible, God's Word. Amen? That's how the pastor feeds the flock. Sometimes people will come to church and they'll have a good Bible study taught from the pastor and say, "That really fed my heart. That fed my soul." That's what the phrase means, to "Feed the flock of God which is among you." How do they do that? By teaching and preaching God's Word.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, "Preach the word," nothing more, nothing less. When Paul met with the Ephesian elders or pastors in Miletus, they came out from Ephesus and he met with them on the beach, he said that you are to "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight." "... feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Then, Peter's own experience in John 21, remember when Peter denied the Lord and fell, and then he was forgiven. He had a personal meeting with the risen Christ. In John 21, when he was on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter said, "Yeah, You know I love You, Lord." He said, "Feed My sheep." He said, "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, I love You." "Feed My lambs." And the Lord said a third time, "Do you even like Me?" Do you philé Me? "Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love you." "Then," He said again to Peter the third time, "feed My lambs. Feed My sheep." The number one calling of a pastor is to feed the flock of God, to teach the Word of God.

Check out Ephesians 4:11-12 where it speaks of God giving gifted men, "... prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"—pastor-teachers is hyphenated, it's one individual—"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry . . . Till we all come in the . . . stature of the fulness of Christ." Pastors are to teach the Bible, feed the Word, build up the body in the Word of God.

Pastors' motives are described in 1 Peter 5:2-3, "... not by constraint," or compulsion. Let's break this down for just a minute. He says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight,"—just keeping oversight of the church, and he says—"not by constraint." One of the dangers could be that a pastor goes into ministry out of compulsion to make someone

happy or to gain recognition or prestige or for pride or whatever it might be other than the call of God. I've said it to so many pastors over so many years that the thing that keeps you going in the ministry is the call of God—not the need in front of you, not the people in front of you, but the call behind you. Without that call, you're going to get discouraged and you're going to give up, but we want to be faithful to what God has called us to. You don't do it by compulsion, you don't want to pressure anyone to go into pastoral ministry, but verse 2, you should do it “ . . . willingly”—for the love of God and for the love of God's people. So, first negatively, “ . . . not by constraint, but”—you should do it—“willingly.”

I heard of a man that woke up on a Sunday morning, and his wife said, “It's time to go to church.” He said, “I don't want to go to church today. I just don't feel like it.” She said, “No, you need to go to church.” “No,” and he said, “the people are mean down there. They don't like me.” She said, “You have to go to church.” He said, “Give me a good reason why I go to church.” “Well, 1) it's the Lord's day; 2) we go to church; 3) you're the pastor.” I get tired in the ministry, but I never get tired of the ministry. I get tired in the ministry, but I don't get tired of the ministry, and what keeps me going is the call behind me, not the need in front of me. It's a love for God and love for God's people. It's doing God's will from the heart.

Notice secondly, verse 2, “ . . . not for filthy lucre,”—or what you could translate as dishonest gain. Several places in the New Testament tells us that a man should never go into ministry for trying to get rich or for money, and that's a problem. Some people are compelled to go in, some people do it for money, and that's dangerous. Now, it's okay for a pastor to be paid and taken care of (Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18), but the motive behind the pastor's heart is not to get paid or not to make money. You do what you do whether you get paid for it or not. This warning also, when it says, “ . . . not for filthy lucre,” this, by the way, dishonest gain speaks of personal popularity—you're not to do it for personal popularity or for social influence. This danger leads to many becoming men pleasers and becoming hirelings. If you're not doing pastoral ministry because of the call of God and the desire to honor God and please God and the call behind you, then you're going to try to cater to the wants and the whims of the people rather than preaching God's Word faithfully and ministering to God's people in a way that pleases God and honors Him.

Notice the contrast. He says not to do it “ . . . for filthy lucre”—or dishonest gain, but the contrast in verse 2—“but of a ready mind”—literally an eager, zealous heart—“ . . . a ready mind.” Have an attitude of eagerness and zeal. It's doing it with delight from the heart.

Then, verse 3, “Neither as being lords over God's heritage”—people. That's another problem that has happened where a man gets into the ministry and they start trying to run people's lives, control people's lives, lord over people's lives, and it's a very dangerous thing. They're not to be doing it to lord over people. Leaders are not lords, they're shepherds. If you know anything about sheep, sheep are not driven, sheep are led. You drive cattle, but you don't drive sheep. You'll scatter them if you drive them. You have to go out in front of them, and you have to lead them. That's how a pastor needs to lead the flock of God.

Notice they are “. . . God’s heritage.” I love that truth is that these people in this fellowship of believers, which is a flock, belong to God. They don’t belong to me, which is good sometimes. When people cause problems in the church, I say, “Lord, they’re Yours. You deal with them. Lord, You take care of that. It’s Your problem,” or “Lord, You have a problem. It’s Your church. You’re the Chief Shepherd, I’m just an undershepherd.” It’s just realizing they’re God’s people. It’s not the pastor’s church, it’s the Lord’s church.

Notice in verse 3, “. . . but being ensamples to the flock,”—being examples to the flock. The pastor’s power is not just in his teaching the Bible, but it’s in his living the Word of God—his character, his conduct, the way he lives, the power of his godly example. In John 13 Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, and He said, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet,” as well. Sheep must be led.

Here’s the third quality of a pastor, a passion to please Christ, a passion to please the Lord. I’ve been asked sometimes by people, “How do you keep all those people in your church happy?” My answer, “I don’t. I can’t.” That’s not my purpose, and that’s not my goal. I’m not here to make you happy. I’m not here to make you like me. I’m not here to get your approval. It’s a blessing when you say, “I appreciate you, Pastor John, and I pray for you,” but that’s not what I’m looking for or why I’m here.

Jesus is, verse 4, “. . . the chief Shepherd,” and I love this fourth verse of this text. He is “. . . the chief Shepherd.” In John 10, He’s called, “. . . the good shepherd.” He’s also in Hebrews called, “. . . that great shepherd of the sheep.” Jesus is the “good Shepherd,” the “great Shepherd,” and I love this, “. . . the chief Shepherd.” Then, in verse 4, Jesus is coming again. What does it say? “. . . shall appear.” This is a clear reference, I believe, to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We’re going to talk about this, by the way, Sunday morning, being ready for His return. That’s part of the doctrine of Christ. We don’t just teach and believe that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, High Priest in heaven; we believe He’s coming back again. Amen? And we believe that He will come back again. Peter believed that. That’s what motivates.

By the way, isn’t it interesting, and I think I failed to mention this when I started tonight, that the section just before chapter 5 was about suffering and the persecution and hardships and trials the church was going through. What is needed when the church is going through difficulties? Shepherds after God’s own heart. Back up one verse into chapter 4, verse 19, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” He’s going to come back to that theme, beginning in 1 Peter 5:5, but actually he goes right in verse 1 and begins to speak to the pastors.

In some modern translations, the NASB actually has, “Therefore,” starting at 1 Peter 5:1, “The elders which are among you I exhort” Because the church is being persecuted, because the church is suffering, because the church is going through times of trial and testing, they are to “Feed the flock.” They are to lead the flock. They’re to protect the flock. They’re to watch over the flock.

By the way, a good shepherd protects the flock from wolves. A good shepherd protects the sheep from wolves—identifies the dangers, the false teachers. People get all upset if the pastor mentions a false teacher, “You shouldn’t get down on them.” Well, how are you going to know who the wolves are, if they’re not identified? They’re wolves in sheep’s clothing. A good shepherd protects by teaching doctrine positively and also warning of the false doctrines and the teachings that are incorrect that you need to watch out for. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, we’re undershepherds as pastors, and the sheep belong to Him.

When Jesus told Peter to, “Feed My sheep,” it’s “My” sheep that they were to feed. And then, Jesus is coming again, verse 4, it’s a reference to His Second Coming. He’s coming to reward the faithful shepherd, verse 4. Jesus is coming to reward His faithful servants. Notice verse 4, “. . . ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Why does he say, “. . . that fadeth not away”?

The word “crown” is the Greek word stéphanos. We get our word “Stephen” from it. That word for crown means victor’s crown. You would run a race in the Greek Olympic Games, and you would get a laurel wreath—a bunch of leaves stuck on your head. Isn’t that wonderful. Maybe you’d get some bush put on your head. You didn’t even get gold, silver, or bronze, or even some funky little plastic trophy. You just get some leaves put on your head, but it’s the victor’s crown. This is intended to be a contrast to the temporal, fading leaves or laurel wreaths of the victor, to the crown that’s incorruptible, “. . . that fadeth not away.” It’s reserved for us in heaven, that Peter speaks of. It “. . . fadeth not away.” It’s the victor’s crown.

When the word “diadem” appears for a crown, that’s the kingly crown, the king’s diadem. This is the victor’s crown. It’s interesting that the first Christian martyr who died for faith in Christ was Stephen, stéphanos, and I believe that immediately he got his victor’s crown. Contrast that with the olive leaves that fade, we get a crown that is at the Bema Seat of Christ that is incorruptible, “. . . that fadeth not away.”

A short little passage, marvelous text on the importance of a pastor having a personal, intimate, being “. . . a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed,” and “. . . a witness of the sufferings of Christ,” a pastor that loves God’s people by feeding “. . . the flock of God,” and, verse 4, a pastor that will get “. . . a crown of glory,” “. . . when the chief Shepherd,” Jesus Christ returns.

Do you know what we’re waiting for? One thing. Not just a pastor, but we all, we’re waiting for the Lord to say these words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Amen?