

XLIV. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Leadership that Makes a Difference Because It Is Different”

I Peter 5:1–4

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In this study we will start in I Peter 5 in our series of I Peter. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. I Peter 5:1–4 says *[1] 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: [2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Wow! I am wowing about an interesting dynamic where we have been in a section of Scripture from I Peter 3:13 till now, built upon who you are in Christ, what you do for Christ, not to be surprised at the suffering that will come from your following of Christ, and be prepared at how God is sovereignly using it in your life. Now we get to I Peter 5:1 and we see elders, church and shepherd. What a shift and almost abruptly. Is there anything that would make sense as to why Peter would leave this focused study on Christian suffering to this? Unmistakably there is something that is here. It seems as if Peter went to a whole new subject or maybe this is where what he has been teaching has led him. In fact, there is a two letter word that really helps us – so.

The first word ‘so’ in I Peter 5:1 gives two signals. Signal number one is what is coming is a conclusion statement. This is the moment of the sermon that you all wait for, when the preacher says ‘finally’ but unfortunately preachers don’t mean ‘finally’ when they say it and neither will Peter. We have two more ‘finallys’ coming in I Peter 5. This tells us that something has been concluded in light of what has been stated. So far he has told us who we are in Christ with 15 Gospel blessings and how we are to live for Christ because of Christ with 9 commands. Then he has told us that every true Christian will to some degree, in some way, in some manner, at some time suffer for Christ’s sake. He reminds us of the words of Jesus and Paul, *[11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Matthew 5:11) and [12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (II Timothy 3:12).*

In light of this, Peter now gives an exhortation to elders of the local church. The exhortation is unmistakable. The exhortation is I Peter 5:2a which says *[2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you...* and it’s based on five assumptions that the ‘so’ brings to the text. Before I get to these assumptions I want to tell you that when you read something in Scripture the writer of the passage is not automaton. He is not a robot where the Holy Spirit has his hand, helping his hand move. God put the writer through what He wanted, made him what He wanted, gave him his personality and all and it’s the Holy Spirit moving that writer as Peter.

Peter is writing this letter to ten churches in the area of what is known today as Turkey and he is telling them about the Christian life, as to what will happen as you live in the world but not of the world and what they can expect from the world. He writes this letter in about 62 A.D.

and about three decades earlier Peter was being prepared for this for God put him in the family He wanted him in, gave him the vocation He wanted him in, gave him the conversion He wanted him to have and gave him three years with Jesus. All of that is coming out as Peter writes this letter. Jesus told Peter to tend the flock, nurture the sheep and feed the flock and it's all coming out in this letter.

Peter is telling them about suffering because he was put through suffering in the opening chapters of the book of Acts, at least two times where he was thrown in jail. Jesus told him if He had told him how he was going to suffer at the end of his life he would have run from it, but He gave him what he needed when that time came. Peter denied Jesus three times so he knows how to minister to us our obedience is uneven, faulty, weak or frail. This is all coming out in his letter and now he is writing to the elders of the church. Why is he so committed to the church?

One reason he is so committed to the church is because he was right there on the road to Caesarea Philippi when Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, [18] *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Two chapters later Peter was there when Jesus said in Matthew 18:15–17a, [15] *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. [16] But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17a] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.* Peter knows you have to have elders whom you take it to when you tell it to the church because you don't stand up in a worship service and shout it out.

Peter was an Apostle but he was also an elder and he was called to do what an elder is called to do. The last thing Jesus allowed Peter to do in a breakfast by the Sea of Galilee was to affirm his devotion three times to Him to counteract his three denials. After each affirmation Jesus told him to ‘tend My flock, nurture My flock and feed My sheep.’ All of that is pulsating within Peter as the Spirit of God leads him to this moment in his letter. Peter is fully aware of how important the church is as he saw that very first church that started with 120 people and by the end of the night there were 3,000 men and their families that joined. He saw that church go to Judea, Samaria and the world even as Jesus said that it would.

So Peter now moves to this whole thing called the church and those who are the stewards of ministry to shepherd that church. According to the text the elders should be among the church and people ought to know who they are. They don't just call for worship services, they worship. They don't just call for a prayer meeting, they pray. They don't just promote small groups, they are in them. Peter says he is one with you. Peter would not have anything to do with someone who would raise him up for he was a fellow elder, because he could have said he was an Apostle. Peter was also a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He can minister to us because he saw the One who suffered for us and now he can help us when we suffer for Him.

Peter learned from Christ how to suffer so he can help us as we suffer for Christ with the mind and heart of Christ. Peter refers to himself as an Apostle when he says he was a witness of Christ from His baptism to His ascension but he doesn't pull the title. Peter just pulls the effectiveness of being there and learning about suffering from what he saw and learned. Christ suffered for three years during His ministry on earth and Peter was with Him. Christ was marginalized, verbally assaulted, mocked and Peter saw the sufferings of Christ, not only the atoning suffering but the lifestyle of suffering.

Peter tells us three things about himself here in this text. One he is an elder with us. Secondly, we learn about suffering from the sufferings of Christ and how to shepherd people

from the sufferings of Christ. Thirdly, we are headed to glory. The sufferings are a taste of glory but we're headed to the glory that is yet to be revealed.

Then he tells us what he wants us to do. We are to shepherd the flock of God. It is not your flock or the elders flock but God's flock. This is not our church, it's His church. In Ephesians it tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). It's His bride. It's His church. It's His people. It's His sheep. They belong to Him. Paul even warns of this in Acts 20:28–30 which says *[28] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

Peter tells the elders to shepherd God's flock by exercising oversight and that's the word *episkopeó* from – *epi* means over and *skopeo* means look intently. This is a function of your shepherding. You oversee the people, not from a distance, but among them with intent. Then he says you don't lord it over them or dominate them for your job as an elder is not to control. Your job as an elder is to lead by shepherding.

What is your motivation? It is not because your wife told you or someone talked you into it. It can't be compulsion or by guilt. Guilt is a gift from God to get your attention but it's not a motivator. You do it willingly. How do you do it willingly? It is as God would have you. You are doing it in His strength and for Him. You are also not doing it for personal (shameful) gain. You are not doing it because of any financial gain. You are doing it eagerly. You are delighting to do it. You are not domineering in your charge but you want to be an example so they can follow you as they follow Christ.

If Christ is the Chief Shepherd then the elders in the church are not chief shepherds. They are under shepherds accountable to the Chief Shepherd. We know He is coming and when He appears we will receive an unfading crown of glory and that means we'll have something to cast back in praise and worship to Jesus in heaven. Elders are shepherds in a local church not a board of directors of a religious organization. Do they have to have meetings on business matters to shepherd? Yes for that is part of their shepherding. As elders our joy ought to come from shepherding not in meetings but that is a subset of it so that things are handling decently and in order. Elders shepherd the flock of God that is among us. This is what Peter is giving us and in this he gives five assumptions as he exhorts the elders to shepherd in the local church.

The first assumption of that word 'so' is that every true Christian is saved by the sovereign grace of God (elect) and is on a grace journey of imperfect, uneven but intentional obedience. That is you are an exile sojourner with a mission, a message and a ministry for Christ. You are the elect of God by Christ, through Christ to serve Christ by obedience in the strength that Christ supplies by the Spirit. The reality is that there will be an inevitable, multi-faceted from Satan in this world. In I Peter 1 through 4, Peter has attempted to communicate this to you.

The second assumption is every true Christian when encountering suffering for Christ will need and should receive the fellowship of encouragement from their brothers and sisters in general, and from the elders sent by Christ in particular. When trials come, as Satan buffets, every one of us need each other. The Bible knows no such context as the lone ranger Christian. You must come to Christ personally but you live for Christ corporately and one of the reasons is when you get buffeted you need your family. When you get hurt, I need momma. We need family.

I remember one time when I was little and I went over to pet the dog but I didn't know the dog was eating on a thrown away ice cream cone and the dog interpreted my pet as me wanting to steal his ice cream cone. This dog decided to eat me alive at five years old. I went in yelling 'Momma!' My mother always wanted to put that medicine on that hurt but she always said 'when I put it on I'll blow on it.' It is wonderful when the family is there when those fiery trials burn and the family is there to blow on it. They hug you up and encourage you. Praise God we have some mothers in Israel here. Praise God we have some fathers in the faith here. The family will not do it perfectly but they will make that attempt and it will be an encouragement. We need that and we particularly need elders who know how to comfort the suffering, who are suffering for Christ.

The third assumption is every true Christian is to be vitally engaged in the Lord's church which He loves. When I left seminary I had a number of parachurch organizations which I love and there is a place for them but I'd like to go ahead and get in the real deal, the church that Jesus loves. If He loves His church then I want to love His church and I want to love His people because they belong to Him. If He has called me to serve them then I want to serve them in a way that they can see His love. That is what elders begin to sense. While I believe every true Christian is to be vitally engaged don't play church or drive-by church and realize not every member is a true Christian.

We know this from Peter for he had a member at the church at Jerusalem who had professed faith, been baptized and added to the church but Peter met him and Acts 8:20:24 says *[20] But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! [21] You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. [22] Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. [23] For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."* *[24] And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."* This man was a magician and he had not yet been converted. Being in the church doesn't make you a true Christian but true Christians know they need to be members one of another. Why? Because when encountering suffering for Christ every true Christian will need and should receive the fellowship of encouragement.

The fourth assumption is a church that is able to equip, encourage and enfold those who are suffering for Christ will be properly led by Godly elders. How do people learn to give principled comfort? How does a congregation, the family of God, learn to speak truth in love? It is not natural. How do they learn the value of the Lord's Day? How do they learn the value of the preaching of God's Word or the priority of intercessory prayer? How do they learn the comfort that comes in the means of grace, such as the Lord's Supper? How do they learn how to fellowship with one another? How do God's people learn how to do missions or personal evangelism? They learn by teaching from the elders and they learn by example. They don't just say we ought to have worship services but they come to it. They don't just say we ought to pray, they lead us in prayer. They are one of the ones evangelizing everybody everywhere. The elders are setting the markers for the shepherding of God's people.

No church will comfort God's people when they are suffering without elders who properly lead them there. That is why I entitled this exposition as leadership that makes a difference because the leadership is different. It's not like the world. There is a different leadership in the church. They are not there to lord it over others or for the title or to control people but they are there to shepherd the people of God as humble under shepherds, fellow

elders like Peter to care for God's people and teach them by example and instruction the priority of the preaching of the God's Word, prayer, evangelism, the sanctity of the Lord's Day, stewardship that is faithful and sacrificial. It doesn't end with leaders, but it does begin with leaders. That's why God calls for Godly elders to shepherd the flock of God.

I want to enumerate how Godly elders are different from this text. Godly elders freely and intentionally will desire and delight to fulfill their calling to shepherd the flock of God among them and their leadership is different because they are marked by these things. One, an elder is in a position of leadership as they are marked by the integrity of their motivation. They are not in it for gain, pride, or self-promotion and whenever that creeps into their life they ask each other to help them kill those things when they come. Paul says in I Timothy 3:1, *[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* They don't aspire to the office for the title, but for the work. We are not office wearers but office bearers. We bear the work and the calling so that we are able and committed to help God's people.

Secondly, elders live with delayed gratification. We don't live for what we get now. Elders, we want to live for the crown that is unfading so that when the Chief Shepherd comes it will be Him that gives it to us. We don't live for the applause of this world. We all need encouragement but an elder ought to shepherd you, not for your encouragement but for your well-being and that doesn't mean you can't encourage him. The Bible tells us to appreciate those who labor over you on your behalf. An at-a-boy doesn't hurt every once in a while. Thank your elders for all that they are doing but elders we don't live for that. We live for Christ. We are the under shepherds that shepherd for the approval and affirmation of the Chief Shepherd, Christ.

Thirdly, we need to make sure that the church is marked by a leadership that has functional plurality. What kind of leadership is that? I kept seeing the Bible say submission and this is where I tend to get into trouble. Baptists, Episcopalians are going to heaven if they know Jesus. This is not a primary doctrine but that doesn't mean it is unimportant to me. It took me five years to work through this but I have finally found a system where every minister, leader and church was submissive to somebody. There is nobody at the top of the heap. There is no independent church or independent preachers. I love every month turning in an accountability report to the elders of our church. I love that our elders give accountability to our presbytery. I love that our presbyteries are accountable to one another. I love plurality because when you get one man you get his strengths but you also get his weaknesses. We have not just organizational plurality but functional plurality.

Every time I see the word church in the Bible and the word elder in the Bible, elder is always plural and church is singular. The local church has plurality of elders. James 5:13–14 says *[13] Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. [14] Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (plural) of the church (singular), and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.* Paul called for elders, plural, in every church. We have to be accountable because when you give one power, power corrupts so we have to be submissive, united and have a functional plurality.

Fourthly, the leaders identify as shepherds and not ranchers. We are not those driving a herd. We are shepherds leading the flock. The rancher is behind the herd driving it but the shepherd is in front. He does have a staff but it has a pointed end so that he can defend the flock from the bear or lion that attacks it. The staff also has a crook on the end so that when the sheep wander they can be drawn back in. The Chief Shepherd is the Good Shepherd and His sheep know Him and He knows His sheep and the elders are among them. The elders know their flock

by name and they know the elders. Jesus says in John 10:27, *[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* You can't follow Him if He is at the back. This brings me to the next marker.

The fifth marker is that because you are a shepherd (elder) then you model and mentor. Your voice mentors them and your example out front they follow. Oh that's how important worship is or that's how you process a sermon or that's how you pray. They are watching you. They are following you so don't hide. Don't do it to be seen but do it knowing you're being seen. Let them see Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, in you. Teach them by example as well as by instruction evangelism, stewardship and all of those things. You are to be an example to the flock because people learn by instruction and imitation. Luke starts off his second volume of Acts by saying in Acts 1:1, *[1] In the first book (referring to the book of Luke), O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.* We are to model and mentor.

Jesus would tell people if they wanted to know if He was the Messiah to look at what they saw and heard from Him. That means we are not domineering or driving. We are setting an example. We are somewhere between zero and one hundred percent perfect but we're not going to be lords but leaders. We lead by modeling to be an example. We lead by mentoring to be a teacher. That is what we ask God to give us the ability to do. Then we do it being accountable and submissive. One of the vows members take in this church is to submit to the elders of this church but the elders they are submitting to have also said that they in their vows submit to each other. Everybody gets in submission and accountability. Everybody is accountable to the Lord before each other.

The sixth marker is that the elders are among the flock. They don't just look for you on the organizational chart, they find you. They know you and you're among them. You call them out. Jesus is there with His sheep so we are to be with our sheep. Is there a time to draw apart? Yes but we are to be among God's people. We don't tell them worship is important only, for we show them worship is important. We don't tell them the sacraments are important for we show them they are important. You can't show if you're not there. There is a reason Peter says the people are among the elders and the elders are among the people.

Every week I get letters from people asking me questions they are struggling with but they are not members of our church. I always start off to them by saying 'I am more than happy to be a supplement in your life but I am not going to intrude in the relationship you have with your pastor and your elders.' They have not recognized me by membership as their pastor/teacher/elder or our elders as their shepherding elders. That doesn't mean we're not there or we don't show up but it does mean we're not going to intrude until we can work rightly with those who they have recognized.

There is a reason when new members join that we put the elders up front because we want them to know that they are going to be there in plurality to shepherd them, and be among them. I have seen that example so many times in our congregation. One time a child attended our VBS and made a profession of faith and from that me and another elder had the privilege to lead his parents to the Lord because of their child doing it. The parents started coming to the church and not many months later the mother found out she had pancreatic cancer and it looked like she may die. They had to do emergency surgery and I was asked to come. I told them 'absolutely' and I immediately got in my car, went and got an elder and this was 1 o'clock in the morning. It's important to do things together and not by yourself so others can see, watch and learn. By the time we got to the hospital room there were already six elders there praying with the husband/father. Their wives we're praying for the mom before she was going into surgery.

I'm late. Praise God that He brought her through it. Four months later the father became a pastor in the pulpit and became a vital part of the ministry of our church. This is elders among the flock showing up. It's amazing what happens even in the midst of suffering.

So here are the takeaways from this study. Number one, find, commit and engage in the life of a church which is led by elder/shepherds who willingly, not perfectly, serve the purposes of the Good Shepherd for the well-being of His sheep. I was in a meeting with some fellow leaders in the church and a man brought a challenge by saying 'Look at the statistics, for our children like never before are not staying in the church for after they go off to college they are not in the church anymore, now we have to come up with something. There is a program we need to do.' I'm not a contrarian leader but I was a contrarian that day for I said 'I'm all for programs but this is not our problem. The problem is that 40 plus years ago the statistic said that on a month with four Sundays the average attendance for an evangelical Christian to evangelical church was 3.4 Sundays a month. Today it is only 1.6 out of four Sundays. This is what is happening. Your children are watching you and you're playing church. You'll show up if a better offer hasn't come along. So when the children get up they just decide they're not going to play church like mom and dad did.'

I watch covenant children, who I know are not perfect, of families who are committed and I know everyone has prodigals, but I see how the covenant blessings go from generation to generation by the priorities that are set in the family, but families don't know how to do that without elders who model it and care for them. But you can't learn unless you really engage in things like small groups, congregational community, worship, fellowship, etc.

The second takeaway elders shepherd with intentional delight the Lord's sheep among you and be among them as shepherds who know they are also sheep. The best shepherds are those who know they're sheep and they need to be shepherded. Then they begin to give that kind of shepherding ministry in the lives of others. There was a couple in the church who came to Christ, got into a small group and there were some elders who shepherded them. A couple of months later I got a phone call from the husband who told me his wife had taken ill and they had no family in the area. He had to take her to the emergency room and they needed someone to look after their kids. I told him to go on because I knew someone would be there momentarily because I had planned to call their small group and elders. When I called the leader of their small group and the elder over their Sunday school community they were already walking in their house to watch their kids.

So I went over to the hospital and by the time I got there she had already gone through the emergency, diagnosed and put into a regular hospital room. I walked into the hospital room and 16 people were already in there praying for her. That was the engagement and the oversight of those among the flock who were shepherding. His wife who was in the hospital ended up becoming the director of the women's ministry at the church and he became a leader in our men's ministry. This is sheep who were shepherded by shepherds who also knew their sheep. It's amazing what God does in a moment like that.

One of my favorite elders was a superior court judge that I met in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was campaigning and he wanted to meet with me at one of my favorite restaurants. This restaurant was my evangelistic fishing pool. We sat down to talk and he asked me if he could talk with me about my ministry. We ended up talking theology, church government and he got so excited that when he got up to leave he said 'you will vote for me, won't you?' I said 'Yeah, I'll vote for you.' That Sunday I saw him and his wife in church and they next thing I

know he and his wife are joining the church I was pastoring. Then he becomes an elder in this church.

One Sunday night after he had become an elder I was preaching on the seven reasons why I abstain from alcohol. He came up to me afterwards and said 'Pastor I'm leaving the church because of that sermon. You brought me here under false pretenses.' I said 'What are you talking about?' He said 'The first time we met I heard you tell the waiter at the restaurant that you wanted the usual which you have just told me was a club soda with lime but I had gone home to tell my wife I had met a Presbyterian preacher who was evangelistic, loves reform theology and drinks a vodka with a twist at lunch. So I came to this church.' I said 'I'm sorry to burst your bubble but I don't.' We ended up great friends and he didn't leave but two years after I came to Birmingham I heard he was dying.

I drove all night to be there with him because he was such a precious man, he and his wife. He couldn't believe I came and I told him I wouldn't be anywhere else because I knew he was close to meeting Jesus. I said 'I love you and I heard Jesus was in this room, that's why I came. He's here.' He said 'Harry, I want to thank you for bringing Jesus.' That's why Peter knows you need elders in the church who will bring the Chief Shepherd, His under shepherds to the sheep and as sheep seek the Chief Shepherd for themselves.

Our elders aren't going to do it perfectly but I'm so grateful for them, but elders let's take it to another level by God's grace and sheep when you get hurt there are some people here who love Jesus and they will blow on it, the Gospel of Jesus. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for my brothers and sisters and the privilege to be together in Your Word. Would You speak to our hearts as elders and thank You for our deacons who carry out those functions that are set aside from the elders so efficiently? Even as we're in the midst of training new elders, thank You for these elders and our people. Father do Your work because Your people are going to be assaulted, Satan is going to buffet, trials are going to come and may they fix their eyes on Jesus assisted by elders just the way Paul said to Timothy, 'follow me as I follow Christ.' God, please bless our leaders to make a difference because they lead with a difference for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH BASED ON FIVE ASSUMPTIONS

Shepherd the Flock of God Among you

FIVE CRUCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

1. Every True Christian saved by the Sovereign Grace of God (Elect) is on a journey of imperfect, uneven, but intentional obedience (Exile/Sojourners) and will encounter the inevitable multi-faceted persecution from Satan in this world for God's purposes.
2. Every true Christian is to be vitally engaged in the life of our Lord's Church which He loves and through which He Loves you.
3. Every true Christian when encountering suffering for Christ will need and should receive the fellowship of encouragement from their brothers and sisters in Christ in general, and from the Elders sent by Christ in particular.
4. A church that is able to equip, encourage, and enfold those who are suffering for Christ will be

properly led by Godly Elders.

5. Godly Elders freely and intentionally will desire and delight to fulfill their calling to Shepherd the Flock of God among them marked by...

- Integrity of motivation
- Delayed Gratification for Reward
- Functional Plurality
- Shepherds not Ranchers...Leaders not lords
- Model (Examples) and Mentor (Teachers)
- Accountable and Submission
- Among the Flock {note}

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

1. Find, commit, and engage in the life of a Church which is led by Elder/Shepherds who willingly serve the purposes of the Good Shepherd for the well-being of His Sheep.
2. Elders shepherd with intentional delight the Lord's sheep among you and be among them as Shepherds who know they are also Sheep.