**BE SHEPHERDS OF GOD’S FLOCK**

Passage: 1 Peter 5:1-14

Key Verses: 2-3 - *Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

Good morning, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. On this beautiful Mother's Day, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all mothers among us. You care for us with love is an example of how God cares for His children. May the Lord bless you abundantly today and always. Amen.

Certain books of the Bible serve as clear instructions for us to live a life of faith in God and service to others. The book of 1Peter is one of such books.

Peter has been encouraging us to apply our faith in Jesus to how we live: Whether it’s holding onto the living hope, pursuing a holy life, loving one another, having a clear identity, submitting to authorities, living with a spouse, doing good in the midst of evil, sharing our faith, resisting sinful influences, or rejoicing in suffering, faith in Jesus is the secret. These instructions are quite clear to us, what is needed is humble obedience to The Word of God, and we will experience God’s Peace and comfort.

Today, we will learn the last chapter of the book. The Apostle and Elder imparts wisdom on shepherding God's flock. He emphasized the responsibilities of spiritual leaders and other believers, as well as God’s promise to reward our faithfulness. May God grant us faith to accept these Words of life. Amen.

**1. Be Shepherds Of God's Flock (1–4)**

[vs.1-3]

1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;

3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Peter addresses the elders, urging them to shepherd the flock of God. Even though he talked to elders, this call is not limited only to elders by age or church leaders alone, but extends to all believers who have spheres of influence—be it in families, workplaces, or communities. Everywhere you find people, there is a need for shepherds. At first glance, people may look self-sufficient, as though they lack nothing. But each person has many agonies that they cannot overcome by themselves. They need shepherds that can guide them with The Truth. They really need a shepherd who will listen to them, understand them, guide them, and serve them with genuine love.

The role of a shepherd is multifaceted: it’s to guide, protect, nurture, and lead by example. David Guzik, a Bible commentator, notes that, "The most important 'tool' to shepherd the flock of God is a heart like the heart of Jesus, one that is willing to give one's life for the sheep."

Peter emphasizes that shepherding should be done "not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for dishonest gain, but eagerly." We must approach shepherd life with a sense of purpose. The most important reason mentioned here is that God wants us to be shepherds of His flock. I think we should respect that well enough. Remember Jesus’ instruction to Peter; ‘Do you love me? Feed my lambs, take care of my sheep.’ Shepherding God’s flock is very important to God and Jesus Christ.

Shepherding should be done willingly, not because one “must.” The word “must” signifies a sense of obligation as a leader, without love or joy. Such people feel burdened and burden others. (example) After making a Bible study appointment, they hope the Bible student does not show up. If the Bible student cancels with some excuse, they say, “Oh, sorry okay,” then secretly dance around happily. (This is me sometimes. May God have mercy on me.)

God wants us to do his work voluntarily, with sincere desire. This comes from knowing God’s heart. But if at the moment you don’t feel that passion for serving, my advice is that you keep serving and praying for God’s help. The Holy Spirit will do His work in you.

For us here, how can we practically Shepherd God’s flock?

Teach the Bible! Pray for them. Shepherds of animals need to carefully check on each one daily. Likewise, to shepherd people we need to pray for them daily, find what Word of God can best help them, feed them a healthy spiritual diet, and help them obey it. To really shepherd God’s flock is not about playing safe; it’s risky. It leads to being used, abused and accused, as Jesus was. It often means having our hearts broken. We are aware of it, but we must not pull out. The needs and dangers of God’s flock constantly keep coming. Shepherding means living an unselfish life, focused on Jesus and others. It’s how we share Christ’s sufferings practically each day. We need to protect God’s flock in our charge from evil and from going in the wrong direction. Once again, how? Teach the Bible! We need to have deep one-to-one Bible studies that’s sincere and intentional for the care of sheep. Not just to fulfil a weekly schedule, but because we truly care for the safety of the sheep. It means not being negligent, but diligently, faithfully guiding––sometimes gently, sometimes alongside them, and sometimes, strongly. Sometimes it means crying to God in our prayers, and sometimes, even becoming sleep-deprived. We need to seek their welfare and get their prayer topics, then pray earnestly as one that truly cares.

In vs.3, “not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

Here, Peter warns against "lording over those in your charge.." Leadership in the church is not about exerting authority but about modeling Christ-like behavior. There is a saying, that, ‘you are the first Bible that unbelievers/people read.’ Sometimes, you may be the only Bible they will ever read. This calls for us to really represent the example of Christ anywhere we are, because one way or another, we are either shepherding people or leading them far from Jesus. Peter introduced himself as an example to the elders in vs.1. When we are a good example to the flock, it fosters trust and encourages others to follow Christ, not out of fear, but out of genuine conviction and love.

Another reason to be shepherds of God’s flock is seen in verse 4 - there is a crown of glory, which we will get from God - The Chief Shepherd. Do you admire this crown at all?

Serving willingly means embracing the role of a shepherd out of love for God and His people, not out of obligation or for personal gain, but we know our reward is from God! Those that faithfully carry out their duty as shepherds will surely receive reward that is infinitely better than temporal gain.

**2. Embracing Humility (5–7)**

[vs.5-7]

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

This section introduces two aspects of humility: humility before people and humility before God.

He briefly instructs younger people, “…submit yourselves to your elders.” Young people tend to be rebellious toward authority. But we need to change this tendency as members of God’s church. When young people submit to elders, they are actually submitting to God’s authority. As they do this, we grow spiritually and may even become elders in the future. Just as we take off dirty clothes and put on clean ones every day, so we need to throw our pride away, and put on humility. There is an even more important reason to be humble. It is because we know that “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humility is the foundation of Christian relationships and community. "If you are willing to be nothing, God will make something of you" - Charles Spurgeon.

In today’s world, young people may feel wiser than the elders due to many reasons. There’s fast knowledge through AI tools, and many smart technologies which our elders struggle to operate. But in any case, we are called to be humble and study the Bible with a humble mind, even though it feels repetitive.

To show humility before God, we cast our anxieties on God. This simply means to pray to God. By casting our cares on God, we acknowledge and show our dependence on God Who cares deeply for each of us and is ever-present in our struggles. This acknowledgement will lead us to pray earnestly to God when we are in difficult situations. Instead of relying on self-help methods or just feeling despondent/condemned, brothers/sisters, pray, pray, pray. Praying to God shows we are living by faith, and the result is that we will glorify God for all our victories (not self, not another). As a young man, I struggle with many anxieties about my future, especially about my career, financial security, and provision for family. Psalm 23 teaches us that The Lord is our Shepherd we lack nothing. Faith in God as my Shepherd can help me overcome anxiety. I can trust that God is loving and He cares for me as a Chief Shepherd. He knows my needs, He will provide and bring justice in His way and in His time. I like to think about it this way; God cared for me so much that He laid His one and only Son Jesus Christ on the Cross so that I can be saved from sin. Now, why wouldn’t He care about our anxieties and worries? Please, humbly trust God, cast your anxieties to Him, He truly cares for you. *(can I hear an Amen!)*

**3. Spiritual Awareness (8–11)**

[vs.8]

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The necessity of spiritual vigilance cannot be overemphasized. Peter’s warning is about the spiritual danger believers face daily. Christians need to be alert since the enemy is actively seeking to harm them. Satan attacks the believers through many strategies. In fact he is on a 24-hours shift everyday, seeking to bring down one more person. The Bible says he is prowling like a roaring lion on a constant search for prey. Who may be his prey? Anyone who falls into sin and refuses to repent *(repeat this)*. By God’s help, I want to expose two major tools with which Satan may devour someone: temptation and accusation.

Satan brings constant temptation to the believers to make us fall into sin, we try to overcome these temptations by being aware of God’s Word. Through Bible study and prayers, we become more alert in our spirit, so that we can decipher the schemes of Satan and overcome daily.

But sometimes we fall into temptation/sin. That should not be the end of the matter. Satan wants the believer to stay down in sin and feel condemned, so after temptation, he brings forward his next tools for devouring someone - accusation and condemnation. Satan pushes such ideas that you are a sinner, you cannot be forgiven or you cannot overcome sin and addictions. Brethren, through this message, let us expose Satan’s strategies and make him powerless against us and our Bible students. The Bible is clear that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1-2), because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. Do not let Satan cheat you! Do not become prey to that powerless lion! God is so loving and forgiving. He is mighty to save you from all temptation, addictions, sin and condemnation. Repent as many times as necessary, but don’t ever stay defeated in sin/condemnation. Since Jesus set you free, you are free indeed! Hallelujah!!

How do we respond to Satan’s constant attacks?

[vs.9]

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Resisting the devil requires a firm foundation in faith and a supportive family of believers. As believers, we must stand united, encouraging one another in the face of trials. Practice to resist the devil by intentional actions of overcoming temptations, and by prayer when it becomes difficult to fight.

One intentional way to resist the devil is actually through our sincere weekly testimony. When we sincerely share our struggles with the family of believers, we get much prayer support and many people we are accountable to (in a good way). You may also find that someone has experienced what you are currently struggling with, and they overcame it. They can support you with prayer and advise on how to overcome your struggles. Do not be shy before your Christian family. Do not ‘keep it to yourself.’ Do not be proud to get help. This family of believers is your support in the fight of faith. We must trust each other. Share testimony every week.

For the early Church, they were under constant persecution, there were also many false teachers that were trying to lead the believers astray. All these were the adversaries to the Church, and Peter warned the believers to be alert and sober so that they will not be deceived.

[vs.10]

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

Peter concludes with a powerful promise: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”

It is important to know that our suffering is not forever. It is only for a little while. When we resist the devil, God shows us Grace. And, by His Grace, He restores us and makes us strong. In this way, each time we resist the devil’s temptation, we become stronger. Spiritual awareness about God’s Grace and restoration helps us believe that we are not losing in life, in fact, we are winning. Hallelujah!! Amen!

**Final Greetings (12-14)**

Peter closes with a few personal remarks. He mentions some greetings from coworkers like Silas (Silvanus), the Church in Babylon (likely Church of Rome) and Mark (John Mark).

He ends with a command: “Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.” The kiss of love was a symbol of family. It was a way for early Christians to express their love, unity, and shared faith through a simple act of greeting.

Peter's exhortation is about our collective responsibility to shepherd God’s people with a willing heart, and in humility. Whether in leadership roles or daily interactions, each of us has the opportunity to reflect Christ's care to those around us. Rutgers University students are like our spiritual children that need care. They cry for help. On this Mother's Day, let's learn the nurturing spirit of mothers, and bring that same care to our spiritual communities. Let’s be shepherds of God’s flock. When we do so, God will be pleased with us. He will surely bless us and reward us with eternal glory. Amen.

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