

PETER'S EPISTLES

1 Peter: Living In Conflict With The Culture XVIII. Shepherding God's Flock During Apostasy (1 Peter 5:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. Several believers in different states have reported on the increasing difficulty they face in living in accord with Bible truth since doing so conflicts with the godless world's deteriorating culture around them.
- B. "First Peter was written to Christians . . . whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 837), so we study 1 Peter for insight and edification.
- C. 1 Peter 5:1-4 teaches on shepherding God's flock during apostasy, and we view it for insight and edification:

II. Shepherding God's Flock During Apostasy, 1 Peter 5:1-4.

- A. In writing to church elders, Peter claimed that he himself was an elder and a witness of Christ's exemplary sufferings and a partaker of the glory to be revealed when he would suffer crucifixion for Christ, 1 Peter 5:1 with John 21:18-19. Peter understood what elders faced in apostasy, so his words were relevant for them.
- B. Accordingly, Peter explained what church elders were to do to succeed in their ministries in God's estimation:
 1. First, elders in an apostate era must "shepherd" (*poimaino*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 690) God's "flock" (*poimnion*, Ibid., p. 691) that is among them, 1 Peter 5:2a, and we explain:
 - a. The verb *poimaino* (Ibid., p. 690) implies **all-encompassing** oversight of a flock, what Christ's call to Peter in John 21:15-17 with Paul's 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2 commission to pastor Timothy teach (as follows):
 - i. Christ told Peter, "*Boske ta arnia mou*," "Feed My [little] lambs" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 412), to expound Bible content with application to life for **immature** believers, John 21:15.
 - ii. Jesus then told Peter, "*Poimaine ta probata mou*," "Shepherd My sheep" (Ibid.), to herd, tend, guide, rule **maturing** believers by expounding Bible content with application to life, John 21:16.
 - iii. Christ finally told Peter, "*Boske ta probata mou*," "Feed My sheep" (Ibid.), to dig deeply in Bible exposition to supply new insight with application to life for **mature** believers, John 21:17.
 - b. The "flock" belongs to **God**, so church elders must realize that they do not possess the people to whom they minister, but that the elders are accountable to Christ for their ministry to God's people! (1 Peter 5:2b)
 - c. The flock God wants elders to oversee are the people among whom they already minister as opposed to the elders seeking to move elsewhere to shepherd some other group for any number of reasons! (1 Peter 5:2c)
 2. Second, elders must "oversee" (*episkopeo*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 298-299) the flock (1 Peter 5:2d), and since the flock belongs to **God**, this oversight must be done **righteously** as follows (1 Peter 5:2e-3):
 - a. Church elders must not assume their oversight by "compulsion," because they must (*anagkastos*, Ibid., p. 52), but rather (*alla*, strong adversative particle; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 802) "willingly" (*ekousios*, Ibid., p. 242), in accord with God's will that they eagerly take the oversight of God's people, 1 Peter 5:2e.
 - b. Church elders must not lead as being "fond of dishonest gain" (*aischrokerdes*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 24), but rather (*alla* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) "eagerly" (*prothumos*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 713), their desire being to shepherd God's people selflessly without financially abusing them, 1 Peter 5:2f.
 - c. Church elders must not lead by "lording over, subduing" (*katakuriueo*, Ibid., p. 413) the "portion" (*kleros*, Ibid., p. 436) of the flock assigned to them (Ibid.), but rather (*alla* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) "be becoming" (*ginomenoi*, pres. ptc. of *ginomai*, "become," Ibid.; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. of the N. T. (Zon.), 1972, p. 78-79) "examples" (*tupos*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 837-838) to the flock, 1 Peter 5:3. Elders must thus lead by an increasingly, overwhelmingly good example produced by their own spiritual growth.
 3. For heeding this instruction, church elders at Christ's coming will receive from the Lord, the Chief Shepherd of the Church universal, the "unfading" (*hamarantinos*, Ibid., p. 41) victor's crown (*stephanos*, Ibid., p. 774-775; Robert C. Trench, Synonyms of the N. T., 1973, p. 78-81) of glory, 1 Peter 5:4.

Lesson: Church elders must shepherd God's flock by way of Bible exposition with application for immature, for maturing and for mature believers, and they must oversee God's flock not out of compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly and not by lording over God's flock, but leading by an increasingly, overwhelmingly good example produced by their own spiritual growth. In doing so, elders will be greatly rewarded by the Lord.

Application: (1) May we church elders heed Scripture's directives for God's great reward, (2) and may we believers in the pew encourage our elders to heed God's admonitions to them for the benefit of the entire body of Christ.