

Place Lurgan Baptist 2:11:2008

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Reading: 1 Peter 5:1-4

16. SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

If you were going to paint the picture of a pastor, how would you paint it? If you were going to write a description of an elder how would you write it? I want to talk to you this about “*Shepherding the Flock*,” or “*How to be a good pastor or elder*.” Now do you recall Peter’s situation? Times of persecution were coming on these believers to whom he was writing, and such times demanded that God’s people had adequate spiritual leadership and so Peter gives this special word to the leaders of the church to encourage them to do their work faithfully. “*Shepherding the Flock*,” is no easy task indeed in this 21st century there is,

1. A Reality that Need’s to be Faced:

The reality is this, some pastors and elders can never do anything right. Someone has expressed like this.

If the pastor is young they say he lacks experience
If his hair is gray he’s too old for the young people
If he has five children he has too many
If he has no children he is setting a bad example

If he preaches from notes he has canned sermons and is dry: If he preaches without notes he is not deep

If he is attentive to the poor people in the church
They claim he is playing to the grandstand

If he pays attention to the wealthy they say he is an aristocrat: If he uses too many illustrations he neglects the Bible: If he does not use enough stories he isn’t clear

If he condemns wrong he is cranky: If he does not preach against sin he is a compromiser: If he preaches the truth he is offensive: If he does not preach the truth he’s a hypocrite

If he fails to please everybody he’s hurting the church and ought to leave: If he does please everybody he has no convictions: If he drives an old car he shames his congregation: If he drives a new car he’s setting his affection upon earthly things

If he preaches all the time, the people get tired of hearing one man: If he invites guest preachers he’s shirking his responsibilities: If he receives a large salary, he is mercenary: If he receives a small salary, well they say it proves he isn’t worth much anyhow

With 30 to 40 Baptist churches without a pastor, that poem is amusing but revealing. 1.

2. A Terminology that Need’s to be Defined:

You see, there are three New Testament terms that are used interchangeably to refer to leaders. Elder (presbuterion 1 Tim 5:19) bishop or overseer (episkopos 2:25 Phil 1:1) and pastor (poimen Eph 4:11) Look for example at (5:1) “ *The elders,*” then (5:2) “ *taking the oversight.*” So what have we got in the New Testament different words, elder, overseer, bishop, pastor, all used to describe the one office. 1. 2.

3. A Plurality that Need's to be Stressed:

For is it not significant that Peter uses the plural “ *elders,*” ? The term always appears in the plural in the New Testament (Acts 14:23 15:4 20:7 Phil 1:1) affirming that the office was designed for a plurality of men. You see, this provides for more ministry care for one man cannot do it all. (Ex 18:13-26) So here is Peter writing to the elders, pastors, bishops, what does he say to them ? Three things. Firstly, there is,

(1) A RELATIONSHIP WE NEED TO CULTIVATE

How leaders need to cultivate a growing relationship with the Lord Jesus and share what He gives us with others. Isn't it interesting to notice how Peter introduces himself to his fellow elders. I mean the claims he makes are in stark contrast with those who claim to be his papal successors. ***He makes no claim to Primacy:*** he simply describes himself as one who is “ *also an elder.*” ***He has no regard for Luxury:*** for he was happy to be known as “ *a witness of the sufferings of Christ.*” ***He had no thought of Despondency:*** for through these sufferings he

had been brought to a keen appreciation of future honour. Peter saw himself as “ *a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*” Do you see what Peter is doing here ? He's writing this chapter out of a growing relationship with Christ. You see, this growing relationship with Christ is,

(a) ILLUSTRATED IN PETER:

Read this chapter in the light of Peter's personal experiences with Christ. I mean (5:1) takes us to Gethsemane and Calvary. “ *The glory that shall be revealed,*” reminds us of Peter's experience with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Matt 17:5) The emphasis in (5:2) about “ *feeding the flock,*” certainly brings to mind our Lords admonition in (Jn 21:16) when the Lord said to Peter, “ *Feed my sheep.*” The warning in (5:3) about “ *lording it over,*” the saints reminds us of Christ's lesson about true greatness. (Lk 22:24) Of course the phrase in (5:5) “ *be clothed with humility,*” takes us back to the Upper Room where the Lord Jesus put on a towel and washed the disciples feet. (Jn 13:1) The warning about Satan in (5:8) reminds us of our Lord's warning to Peter that Satan was going to “ *sift,*” him. (Lk 22:31) You see, Peter wrote these words inspired by the Spirit of God, out of his own personal experience with Jesus Christ. He had a vital and growing relationship with Christ and this made it possible for him to minister effectively to God's people.

Do you have a vital, growing relationship with Christ ? As elders are we men who walk with God, and who are growing in our spiritual lives ? I wonder at times is the

very reason why don't minister effectively to others ? I am very grateful for my spiritual heritage but one thing that greatly concerns me, is that my role can turn me into a sermon producing machine, instead of ministering out of a growing relationship with Christ. Listen to the Prince of Preachers C.H. Spurgeon, he says, "*It will be vain for me to stock my library if I neglect the culture of myself my own spirit, soul, and body are my nearest machinery for sacred service, my spiritual faculties, and my inner life are my battle axe and weapons for war.*" (a)

(b) DEMONSTRATED BY PAUL:

Timothy Paul's son in the faith (1 Tim 1:2) was a shy and retiring young preacher. (2 Tim 1:8) Paul left him at Ephesus to do the work of God. Among other things this included exposing false doctrine (1 Tim 1:3) establishing order with the local church (3:15) preaching the Word, (2 Tim 4:2) and doing the work of an evangelist. (4:5) Timothy's ministry was varied and demanding, but against the backcloth of this arduous work Paul encouraged Timothy to cultivate a growing relationship with Christ. So he says to the young preacher "*Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine.*" (1 Tim 4:16) "*Keep thyself pure.* (5:2) "*But thou O man of God flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*" (6:11) In other words, cultivate a vital, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. You see, its so easy for shepherds of the flock to be consumed with the spiritual welfare of others, than their own is neglected.

Robert Murray McCheyne was pastor in Dundee. His ministry was so effective and fruitful. But speaking to fellow preachers he said, "*Remember you are God's sword, His instrument, I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talent God blesses so as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God.*" (1)

(2) A RESPONSIBILITY WE NEED TO ENUNCIATE

For Peter here reminds the elders of their God given responsibility. And he tells us three things.

(a) WE ARE TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK:

"*Feed, or shepherd the flock of God which is among you.*" (5:2) Now the image of the flock is often used in the Bible and it's a very instructive one. (Ps 23:1 Is 40:11 Heb 13:20-21) We were once stray sheep, wandering toward ruin, but the Good Shepherd found us and restored us to the fold. Philip Keller says, "*It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. Sheep do no take care of themselves as some might suppose. They require more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.*" You see the shepherd had many tasks to perform in caring for the sheep. Does the shepherd need to **protect** the sheep from thieves and robbers ? Then the elders must **protect** God's people from those who would want to spoil the flock. When Paul was saying goodbye to

the Ephesian elders he warned them. He said, “ *For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock therefore watch and remember.* ” (Acts 20:29-31) This is the responsibility of the elders to protect the flock. I want to tell you that there are all sorts of wolves out there who would want to bring in false teaching, so the shepherd has got to guard the flock. Sometimes along the way the shepherd has got to make some tough decisions. Times when the shepherd says “ *No, I am sorry we are not allowing that into this flock.* ” Does the shepherd need at times to **discipline** the sheep ? Sometimes the sheep don’t like it when the elders rebuke them, but this ministry is for their good. Does the shepherd at times need to **restore** a wayward sheep and gave it personal attention ? Then the elders need to minister to the flock personally.

(1 Thes 2:11) But of course the primary responsibility is to **feed** the flock. This is the shepherd’s foremost responsibility. Is this not what the Risen Lord instructed this very man Peter to do on the shore of Galilee ? “ *Jesus saith unto him, feed my sheep.* ” (Jn 21:17) Brethren, are you feeding the flock of God ?

Do you know what I have discovered over the years ? The best thing I can do for you dear people is to be prepared to teach and preach, and you need to be releasing me more and more from good things that I might give myself to prayer and the ministry of the Word. (Acts 6:4) Dr. Graham Scroggie said to the elders of a church where he just commenced his ministry. “ *What do you want ? My feet or my head for you cannot have both.* ” A wise man said very long ago “ *A pastor who is always available*

isn’t worth much when he is available. ” I mean a man has to be alone in the Word, in prayer, in study getting the food for the flock and that takes time, more time than most of you will ever realise. My its not an easy thing to be a faithful shepherd of God’s sheep and what makes it even more challenging is the fact that the flock is not the shepherds but God’s. It is God’s flock purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28) Does that mean that the elders need to be careful as how they minister to God’s sheep ? It does, why ? Because one day the overseers are going to give an account of their ministry. (Heb 13:7) Does that mean that the sheep need to be careful how they respond to the shepherds ? It does, why ? Because one day you’re going to give an account of your ministry. (1 Cor 4:5) (a)

(b) WE ARE TO SERVE THE FLOCK:

1. We are to serve the flock Effectively:

“ *Taking the oversight,* ” means “ *one who looks over for the purpose of leading.* ” Will you notice that the shepherd is both “ *among,* ” the flock and “ *over,* ” the flock. Because he is one of the sheep the elder is “ *among,* ” the flock. But because he is called to be a leader, the elder is “ *over,* ” the flock. Some folk try to emphasize the “ *among,* ” relationship and refuse to follow the authority of the shepherd. Others want to put the pastor on a pedestal and make him a “ *super saint,* ” who never mixes with the people. The effective elder needs both relationships. He must be “ *among,* ” and he needs to be “ *over.* ” 1.

2. We are to serve the flock Willingly:

“ *Not by constraint but willingly,* ” (5:2) “ *Not under compulsion but voluntarily.* ” Compulsion means “ *to be compelled by force.* ” Like getting your teenager out of bed early in the morning to go to school. That is compulsion. Peter, of course isn’t referring to a teenager at school but a shepherd with his flock. A young man was sleeping soundly one Sunday morning when his mother came in and shook and said, “ *Wake up, son. You’ve got to get up you’ve got to get out of bed.* ” He groaned and complained. “ *Give me three good reasons why I have got to get up this morning.* ” Without hesitation his mother said, “ *Well, first of all, it’s a Sunday morning, and its only right that we be in church. Second, because its only forty minutes until church starts, so we don’t have much time. And third you’re the pastor.* ” Faithful shepherds are to be willing “ *in season and out of season,* ” when we feel like it, when we don’t, when the church is growing as well as when its not. How deplorable that there are so many lazy Christians among church leaders who are willing to glory in a title, but fail to shoulder the work that leadership demands.

3. We are to serve the flock SELFLESSLY:

“ *Not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind,* ” (5:3) That is with eagerness. Now while it is Scriptural for a church to support its pastor (1 Cor 9:14 1 Tim 5:17) making money must not be the main motive for his ministry. You ought not to get into spiritual leadership for what you can get out it. Whether it be money, prestige or power. Peter

says you are not to get into the ministry for what you can get out of it, but you are to get into the ministry for what you can give into it. The phrase “ *a ready mind,* ” means “ *an eager mind.* ” It’s the same word that Paul uses in (Rom 1:15) when he says, “ *I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.* ” Willingness, an eagerness to serve. Does that describe those of us in leadership ? You know, there is nothing as exciting as a shepherd, an elder who emits enthusiasm. Such zeal is contagious. His love for the Scriptures becomes the flocks love for the Scriptures. His burden for the lost becomes their burden. His desire for the place of prayer becomes their desire. *Is it not refreshing to be around shepherds who are getting on in years but are still eager and enthusiastic ?* (a) (b)

(c) WE ARE TO SHOW THE FLOCK:

Look if you will at (5:3) The word “ *heritage,* ” means “ *lot.* ” Here it refers to the lots or portions entrusted to the elders. The Lord assigns His workers to the places of His choosing and in those places we are to be examples and not dictators. Peter says, “ *Not as little tin gods.* ” Leadership is not dictatorship. You see, cannot drive sheep, you must go before and lead them. ***It has been well said that the church needs leaders who serve and servants who lead.*** Isn’t it sad when election to church office breeds pride and disrespect for others. The story is told of a famous but highly temperamental soloist who was rehearsing for the Metropolitan Opera House. Toscanini gave her very positive instructions just as he gave them to the members of his orchestra. This proved

too much for the prima Donna's vanity and she said proudly, "*I am the star of this performance.*" To this Toscanini replied, "*Madam, in this performance there are no stars.*" He knew that unless the soloist and orchestra were willing to work together in perfect harmony, there could be no more performance worth hearing. Is that not true in the spiritual world? Those who lead and those who follow must stand together on the common ground of a consecrated concern to work for the Lord, realizing "*there are no stars.*" For this reason Peter reminds us we elders are to "*ensamples to the flock.*" (5:3) Well are we? Are you example in godliness, in prayer, in devotion to the Saviour? Are you an example in your appetite for His Word? In your passion for the lost? Are you example in encouragement? In attendance? In your concern for the people of God?

(1) (2)

(3) A REVELATION WE NEED TO ANTICIPATE

What is it? The appearing and unveiling of Jesus Christ. Chief Shepherd is one of the most beautiful titles for the Saviour in all of Scripture. The gospel of John calls Him the *good* shepherd. (Jn 10:11) The writer to Hebrews calls Him the *great* shepherd (Heb 13:20-21) Here Peter calls Him the *chief* Shepherd. You see, there is the *Good Shepherd Redeeming*, there is the *Great Shepherd Resurrected*, there is the *Chief Shepherd Returning*. Is this not a motivation for faithful service? Is this not an incentive for godly overseers? Here is something that should pastors and elders specifically and believers generally. What?

(a) THE PROSPECT OF THE SAVIOUR'S RETURN:

" *The chief Shepherd shall appear,* " (5:4) You know, at present other things often appear and seem to fill our attention. We are confronted by Satan's numerous devices and apparent successes. We see our own failure. We look at the apathy and indifference of 21st century believers. We get disheartened when we think of Christians who won't even speak to each other but "*the chief Shepherd shall appear.*" Is this not the remedy? Looking beyond to what we see at present to what will be seen in the future. "*The chief Shepherd shall appear,*" and the prospect of my Lord's return should motivate me to faithful service. My fellow elders what if He appeared today? What about that ministry you intended to exercise but you didn't get round to it? What about that believer you wanted to encourage but you didn't call? What about that soul you intended to warn but you were just too lazy?

My fellow believers what if the chief Shepherd appeared to day? Would you bow your head in shame? That word of apology was never given. That loved one was never told. That opportunity for service was never seized. (a)

(b) THE PROMISE OF THE SERVANTS REWARD:

" *Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,* " (5:4) The crown Peter mentions here was the athlete's crown, usually a garland of leaves or flowers that would quickly fade away. But the faithful shepherds crown is a crown of glory, a perfect reward for an inheritance that

will never fade away. (1:4) Unlike the other crowns this is an exclusive crown. ***It is reserved for those who faithfully shepherd God's flock, God's way.*** Near Anwoth in Scotland there stands the ruin's of a church building. The building at one time seated one hundred and fifty people. By modern standards it would not have been a successful church. But the man who pastored that flock was the godly Samuel Rutherford, whose book "***Letters of Samuel Rutherford,***" is a spiritual classic. His ministry continues though today that church building is in ruins. Samuel Rutherford suffered for Christ, indeed as he lay in prison in Aberdeen thinking of his old congregation in Anwoth he expressed his thoughts like this.

***Fair Anwoth on the Solway to me thou art still dear
Even from the verge of heaven I drop for thee a tear
Oh, if one soul from Anwoth meet me at God's right
hand***

My heaven will be two heavens in Immanuel's land

" *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear,*" Samuel Rutherford shall "receive a crown of glory." Elders, is this reward not worth striving for? Oh, today so many Christian workers and leaders are labouring for many different kinds of rewards. Some work are working hard to build personal empires, others are striving to win the applause of men, still others seek promotion in their denomination. But all of these things will fade one day and the only thing that will count will be the "*well done,*" of the Savior and the unfading crown of glory that goes with it. Elders, here is (1) (2) (3) "**And when the chief Shepherd shall appear**"

Can I ask, what will that mean for you? When that day comes will you hear the Saviour's well done? We often sing "*Bye and bye when I look on His face I'll wish I had given Him more.*" Do not reserve your regret until then. Give the Saviour more now.