

Studies in 1 Peter-16 1 Peter 5:1-9

by Dwight Pentecost

The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission to authority, the responsibilities of elders, and the need for believers to be sober and vigilant in the face of the devil's attacks.

Duration: 26:03

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the Apostle Paul addresses the saints in Ephesus, comparing them to sheep in need of a shepherd and children in need of parental care. He emphasizes that God has provided spiritual fathers and elders to guide and protect his children. Paul warns of the dangers of pride and encourages humility, drawing from the example of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. He urges the believers to trust in God's way of dealing with moral and doctrinal issues, rather than taking matters into their own hands. Additionally, Peter exhorts the flock to be sober and vigilant, as the devil is constantly seeking to devour them. The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission to God's authority and trusting in His provision for deliverance.

Transcript

1 Peter, chapter 5, beginning at the 1st verse, and reading down through the 9th verse. I am reading from the Revised Standard Version. So, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed, to tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint, but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you that are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves, unto the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful.

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. Speaking to the Ephesian elders before his departure from Ephesus for Jerusalem, the Apostle

Paul exhorted them to faithfulness and the responsibilities resting upon them as shepherds of the flock.

In the twentieth chapter of the book of Acts, in verse 28, Paul said to the elders, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." There was need for this exhortation because of the threat that the Apostle foresaw, for he said in verse 29, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing a flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, seeking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.

Remember that by the space of three years I cease not to warn every one of you night and day with tears." The saints in Ephesus were viewed by the Apostle Paul as sheep who needed a shepherd. They were viewed as children who needed parental care. The children were not left to themselves, nor was the flock left to itself.

In the economy of God, God had provided for his children. God had provided for his sheep and for his land, and God's provision for his children was to give them spiritual fathers, to give them elders. For the sheep he had provided shepherds, or overseers, who were responsible to protect the flock.

The same passage in Acts tells us that Paul saw a twofold danger. There was a danger from within, and there was a danger from without, and therefore the elders were responsible to oversee, to watch for, to tend the flock. In writing to Timothy, Paul sees a similar danger that necessitated the oversight of the flock by the shepherds.

In 1st Timothy, chapter 1, verses 19 and 20, the Apostle exhorted Timothy to hold the faith and the good conscience, with some having put away concerning faith have made shipwrecks. This has to do with doctrinal defection, and there were those who had made shipwrecks of the faith. Then, in the same epistle in chapter 6, in verses 9 and 10, the Apostle saw the danger of moral defection, and he writes concerning those who have erred from the faith.

For the love of money is the root of all evil, which some have coveted after, and they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Some had made shipwrecks of the doctrines of the faith. There were those who had erred from the practice of the faith, and in the light of these dangers there was need that the elders should be found faithful in the discharge of the responsibilities placed upon them.

It was this truth that the Apostle Peter, writing in 1 Peter, chapter 5, verses 1-4, laid upon those who were elders along with Peter, to whom had been given the responsibility for the oversight of the flock. Peter was living in the midst of extreme persecution, and those to whom Peter is writing were being persecuted for their faith. Peter is writing to preserve the flock of which he was a shepherd.

He reminded the elders, or the shepherds in the flock, of their responsibilities. They were to feed or to tend the flock. 1 Peter 5, 2. They were, in verse 3, to set an example to the flock of faith, of confidence, of trust in the midst of the persecutions and the sufferings that they endured.

Then again, in verse 4, they were to serve the flock as servants of the flock, not to please the flock, nor with a view to receiving reward from the flock, but they were to serve the flock with a view to pleasing the owner of the flock. As we proceed in Peter's teaching to consider this morning, verses 5 to 9, in chapter 5, we find that Peter turns from his charge to the shepherds to his charge to the sheep. If there is not a

proper relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, there will be no point to the provision that God has made for the oversight of the flock.

If God raises up shepherds, and the shepherds are derelict in their responsibilities, proper oversight, protection, care, guidance, and provision will not be provided for the flock. But if God does provide shepherds, and they are faithful, but the sheep refuse the shepherds the right to exercise oversight, then God's economy will be dissipated, and the sheep will not have experientially that which they need. So, after Peter is given his exhortation to the shepherds, he moves in verses 5 and following to the sheep.

The sheep are addressed by the term younger in verse 5. This is in contrast to the elders, the shepherds, in verse 1, and the responsibility resting upon the sheep is that they should submit to those who are their shepherds. The sheep are to submit to the oversight of the shepherds. The sheep are not given the responsibility of self-preservation, of self-direction.

They are to trust themselves to the spiritual oversight of those who, in the will of God, have been raised up to perform this ministry for them. Sheep, as we have emphasized before, are helpless. They are defenseless.

They have no natural means of protection. They must depend on the faithfulness of the shepherd. But the shepherd cannot do his work if the sheep refuse to let him do his work, and if they are not in right relationship to the shepherd.

So, the sheep are to submit to the oversight of the shepherd, and this is commanded in verse 5. Submit yourselves unto the elder. But then the apostle points out another fact in this verse, and that is that the shepherds, in the exercise of their responsibilities, are to be governed by the need of the sheep. It is the need of the sheep that dictates the ministry of the shepherd, and when Peter says, all of you be subject one to another, Peter is saying that because God sets some apart as shepherds and others as sheep, it does not mean there is no relationship between the two, and it does not mean the shepherds have no responsibility to the flock.

Contrarywise, he says, that even the shepherds are to subject themselves to the sheep so that in the exercise of their responsibility they are governed by the needs of the sheep. This means, you see, that the elders or the shepherds must give careful attention to the flock. How derelict a shepherd would be if he was so careless in the exercise of oversight he did not notice that one sheep had strayed away and was missing.

Our Lord emphasizes that responsibility to the shepherd. You'll remember when he tells the story of the man who had a hundred sheep, and when evening came he discovered that while ninety-nine were safely in the fold, one was missing, and as a true shepherd he left the ninety-nine in the protection of the fold and went to seek the one that was lost. That was the responsibility of a shepherd.

How careless a shepherd would be if the shepherd did not notice that one of the sheep had been lacerated by the thorns and need the healing oil that he carried in a pouch at his waist. How careless if the shepherd should not recognize that after the sheep had been feeding in the hot sun all morning they needed water, and if he did not leave them besides a still water so that they could drink. You see, if the shepherds are to exercise their responsibility to the sheep, they must know the needs of the sheep, and they must give such careful attention to the individual sheep that they can structure their shepherd's work to the needs of the flock over which God has made them in samples.

And that's what Peter has in mind, I think, when he says, all of you, shepherds and sheep alike, be subject one to another. The sheep in subjection to the authority of the shepherd, and the shepherds in subjection to the need of the sheep, and thus there will be a provision made for the flock. Now, in this relationship of submission of the sheep to the shepherds, Peter says that ye should be clothed with humility.

Clothed with humility, the explanation is given that God hates pride. God will resist the proud but give grace to the humble. Peter evidently had learned a lesson.

It had been deeply impressed upon him as he had watched that great shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ, ministering to the spiritual needs of the little flock over which he was shepherded sometime before this. If you go back into the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, you'll recall that when our Lord took the twelve into the upper room before they sat down to the Passover feast, we read in verse 4, or as they were in the course of the Passover feast in John 13, 4, Christ rises from supper, laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Our Lord evidently wore the robe of a teacher, a robe that set him apart as a rabbi, one who was able to teach and instruct them in the truth of God. When our Lord came to this point in the observance of the Passover supper, he laid aside that robe of dignity and beauty and honor, and our Lord girded himself or robed himself with a towel. The towel was the emblem of a servant.

The teacher was in a position of authority. The servant had no authority, and the one who could say, the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to the needs of that little flock there in that upper room. They needed the ministration of cleansing, and so our Lord girded himself with a towel.

He put himself in a servant's position, and as one in the servant's position, he ministered to the needs of that little flock, and he washed their feet and wiped them with a towel wherewith he was girded. That so impressed Peter that Peter burst out and said, Lord, I'll never permit you to be a servant to me. That was when our Lord said, Peter, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me, and Peter cried out for a complete cleansing because he wanted fellowship with the one who was there ministering to him.

Peter never forgot that, that instance of our Lord's ministry to him as one who had brushed himself in the servant's position, because when Peter came to write to his suffering sheep in 1 Peter 5 and verse 5, he says, All of you be girded with the thigh of humility, exactly the same way Jesus Christ girded himself with the thigh of a servant there in the upper room. For Peter, in writing this text, used exactly the same Greek word translated here, clothed, as was used in John chapter 13 on several occasions translated there, girded. Now, Peter's mind went back to the upper room as he saw Jesus Christ lay aside that which was a badge of men's acceptance and take that which was the badge of a servant to minister to them.

Now, in writing to those who are going through these sufferings, Peter reminds them that God has made a provision for their protection. He has not placed the responsibility on the sheep, he has placed it on the shepherds. But the shepherds will be unable to do their work unless the sheep are in right relationship to their shepherds.

Therefore, he says, you take as your badge and your emblem, you take as your clothing and as your covering the same mind that Christ had when he clothed himself with a towel, for submission to authority demands humiliation on the part of those who subject themselves to the authority. So, Peter says to the sheep, you have no right to be independent, no right to be lawless, no right to be stubborn and rebellious,

because God's method of protecting the sheep in a day of moral and doctrinal defection is to raise up personally shepherds whom he makes responsible for the sheep, and he asks you to submit to their authority. The next thing that he points out in verse 6 concerning this submission is, in other words, shrumble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

The point that Peter is making is that when a believer in an assembly of believers submits himself to the authority of the elder, he is submitting to the authority of God, and one submits to God by submitting to God's constituted representative. You remember in writing concerning the submission of the wives to husbands, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 22, Paul writes, Submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord, and Paul taught that submission of the wife to the husband is submission to the Lord, because the husband is constituted as the head of the wife. In writing to children, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 1, he says, Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right, and what he is saying is that when a child submits to the authority of parents, the child is submitting to the Lord, because the parents are God's constituted authorities in the home.

Paul, writing in Romans 13, says that when one submits to government, one is submitting to the Lord, because governors are appointed by the Lord, and one submits to the Lord by submitting to government. Now, we have seen in the area of personal relationships in the home, in the general area of relationships in the home, in the area of state, that God's method was to set up authority and then compel subjection to those authorities, and men are subject to God as they are subject to the constituted authority. When we move into the realm of the church, we find exactly the same setup.

God sets up men in authority, and when individuals submit to the authority that is in the elders, they are submitting to God. And Peter brings that up in 1 Peter 5 and verse 6, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and you humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God by submitting to the authority of the elder. This submission carries with it a promise in verse 6 that he may exalt you in due time, and as God faithfully ministers through the elders that there will be protection and guidance and deliverance for the flock, the flock will be fed by the ministry of the elders, that every need of the flock will be met.

God works through those whom he puts in places of authority, and those who receive the benefits of this are those who submit to them. The next thing that Peter asks is found in verse 7, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Now, the submission to the elder is an act of confidence in God by the one who makes the submission, or does the submitting, casting all your care upon him.

If you were to sit down and try to reason it out logically or rationally, you perhaps would think of better ways of giving oversight to the flock of God than God's method. You're convinced that you know your needs better than any elder, that you're far better able to take care of yourself than someone else. You want to declare your independence and work out your own problems, the problems of your own individual suffering, the persecution, and I'm sure these believers perhaps were tempted to think of that.

When they submitted to elders because God told them to, they are saying, in effect, God, maybe I don't understand this, and it doesn't seem the best way to me, but you have told me to do it. I'm going to do what you told me to do and trust you to meet my needs as a sheep in the flock, so that when one casts his care on God, he does so by submitting to the oversight that God has constituted in the assembly. I realize that this verse is very well known.

You have used it personally and individually concerning your needs and your cares over and over and over again. But, beloved, I think you've lifted this out of its context, and because this is such a precious

personal promise, I can cast my care upon him because he cares for me. That's certainly true, but will you see it in its context? Peter is talking about a flock that are being ravaged by persecution, a flock where there is danger from within, and Peter says to the flock as a whole, you trust God to supervise the flock through his appointed way and stop trying to work out your own salvation.

Trust him to do this, and God will do it. He's talking about the supervision of the whole assembly of believers. Perhaps a group of believers could well conclude that they could handle some of this practical or moral or doctrinal defections in the elders, and they want to do something about it themselves.

Peter says, you trust God to do it in his way, casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you. In the eighth verse, we have the second exhortation that Peter gives to the flock. He told them in verses five through seven that they are to submit.

Now he tells them why this submission is so necessary, and it brings the exhortation, be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Be watchful or be on guard. With verse, Peter gives up several reasons why the sheep need to be in subjection to the shepherd and then on guard against the adversary.

The first reason is because of the nature of the adversary. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, and the phrase roaring lion emphasizes the nature of the enemy. The lion is bent on just one thing as he stalks his prey, and that is the destruction of the prey.

Peter wants them to be reminded that their adversary is no gentle lamb, no harmless dove. Their enemy is a lion that is stalking prey. Therefore, they need to be in subjection to those who stand guard over them.

The second thing he emphasizes about the adversary is the method that the adversary uses. He walketh about, or literally, he stalks. This emphasizes the stealth, the secrecy with which Satan pursues the sheep of God's flock.

An elephant can afford to go crashing through the brush, but not a lion, and if the lion is to destroy his prey, he must do it by stealth. This concept goes all the way back to the terrifying chapter of Genesis, where in chapter three we are told that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, and his subtlety came from the one who controlled him, the subtle one that is Satan. And there is need that the sheep submit to the watch care of the shepherd because of the subtlety of the adversary.

Then he speaks also of the purpose of the enemy in this eighth verse. This one whose nature it is to destroy by stealth is seeking whom he may devour. Satan is not trying to frighten the sheep, he is seeking to destroy the sheep.

He is not seeking to divert the sheep, he is seeking to kill the sheep. He is not content with inflicting a slight wound, he wants to utterly decimate the flock. Never forget it for a moment, and if the sheep are not cognizant of the nature of the enemy and the method of the enemy and the purpose of the enemy, they will never see things in their true light.

That's why Peter says, be sober, and sobriety here has to do with seeing things according to their true nature. It has to do with understanding what Satan is, how he operates, what his plans and programs are, so that when Satan comes with his doctrinal defections and his moral defections and his practical defections, the sheep will be worn by the shepherd of the true nature of things, will be guarded and preserved. But those who have the gifts of discern and the gifts of oversight and the gifts of teaching

cannot exercise their gifts unless the sheep are in subjection to their shepherd.

But when we come on in verse 9, Peter brings us to his third exhortation addressed to the flock. They are not only to submit and to be on guard, but they are to resist the adversaries. The word translated resist, when Peter says, whom resist steadfast in the faith, is a word which means to actively war against.

There is no passivity in the Christian life. The Christian life is not viewed as a little citadel surrounded by an impregnable bastion behind which the believer takes refuge and enjoys peace and security because the adversary cannot penetrate. The Christian life is viewed as a battle on an open plain where the only protection he has is the protection that there is provided in the word of God and the armor that is provided by the captain of our salvation.

The believer is not protected from the enemy's attack, he is protected so that he can endure and sustain the adversary's attack. He is not given a refuge through which he can run, but he is given the means of victory. That is, he actively pursues the adversary, the adversary who will not fight against hopeless odds, retreat and leave the attacking one the victor.

And so Peter says to those who are being persecuted, who are experiencing the fiery darts of the evil one, that if they will press the battle, if they will resist or do wars against the adversary steadfastly in the faith, they will be victorious. And Peter can point to myriads of believers who in their own generation have endured the same darts that were hurled against them, but have been victorious and triumphant, and the victory of other saints was to encourage these persecuted saints to victory against their adversary, the devil. Now, Peter gives no hope that in this life, saints will escape the fiery darts of the wicked ones.

But Peter does emphasize the great truth that God has made a provision for his flock. I am anxious that you should see what God's provision is. God has raised up shepherds upon whom is placed the responsibility for the total supervision of the flock, and the flock has the one major responsibility of submitting to those whom God in his economy has placed in positions of authority.

When they manifest the humility of Christ and clothe themselves with the mind of Christ and express a willingness to submit to the authority that God has instituted, they are submitting to God, and when they submit themselves to God and to God's provision, God undertakes their defense. And because we are subject to the authorities that God has constituted, we can then press the battle against the adversary as individuals, but more in this passage as a congregation of believers. We can go from victory to victory and from triumph to triumph, and we can press the adversary against the wall if we are properly related to the program of God, having shepherds who exercise their authority, their oversight, discharge their responsibilities according to the word of God, and have sheep who are content to submit themselves to God's provision and trust God's method to grant them delivery.

One of the most difficult things that any man is asked to do is to give up his own rights, to give up his own wisdom, to give up his own abilities and trust himself to another. It is humiliating to put ourselves in the position of sheep who don't know, to put ourselves in the position of children who need to depend upon someone else to provide that which we need. That's God's method.

Men who have never received the experience of the forgiveness of sin find it naturally most difficult to come to the place where they confess they cannot save themselves, they cannot work out their own salvation, they cannot buy their way to heaven, they cannot offer God something for eternal life. It's difficult, I say, to come to the place where a man says, I have sinned, I need a savior, and I will trust Christ

for my salvation. Just as hard, unless the Spirit of God gives us the mind of Christ as saints of God to say, I need a shepherd.

What Peter commands, be clothed with humility or apart from dependence upon God's probation. There is no victory, there is no triumph, there's no defeat of the adversary, there's no salvage. Be girded with humility.

We pray, our Father, that God the Holy Spirit, who through the Apostle Peter has revealed God's provision for the protection of his little flock of sheep, might give us to exercise our care, lest we who are sheep should not be in proper relationship to God and our shepherd, and lest we who are shepherds should be derelict in our duty and responsibility under God to the sheep. For as shepherds and sheep are subject to the plan of God, we pray thou will lead us from victory to victory. Thou will preserve us from doctrinal and practical defection from the faith.

We might be a flock nurtured and cared for, provided by that great shepherd of the sheep, as he works his will through the shepherds he has provided for us. Let thy blessing rest upon us, we pray. May the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace rest and abide upon each one, now and ever.

Amen.

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