

Under-Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1-5

Peter turns his attention to the leaders in the churches he's writing to. But he begins by describing himself.

Peter: a fellow elder: Just think how Peter – this great apostle- could have described himself. But he doesn't. He describes himself as a fellow elder, no different to them, struggling with the same things they struggle with. And of all the things he could have claimed to be a witness of Peter stakes his plea to them on being a witness of Christ's sufferings. Of course, at the height of Christ's sufferings Peter had denied Jesus. And Peter knows that the only reason that he could be considered a leader in the church in anyway, is because of those sufferings. That at the cross, Christ bore Peter's sin, that he might know forgiveness and grace. Through those same sufferings that same grace is made available to each one of us.

Peter then makes his charge to the elders:

Shepherd the flock of God

This was the same charge Jesus gave to Peter when he restored him. And Peter's description of what it means to lead God's people, to shepherd them, is full of truth, because the job of the shepherd is to feed the sheep and shoot the wolves.

The role of elders in the church is to feed and nurture and nourish the church, through the word of God. That's why Paul says an elder must be able to teach. It also means saving the sheep from themselves. The second job of the shepherd is to shoot the wolves: to protect the church from false teachers. And because it's God's flock (not the elders, or the sheep's or the world's) the only foundation for the church is the word of God.

Then Peter spells out three dangers elders can fall into:

The Elders: three dangers

Compulsion: serving because you have to, from a wrong attitude.

Money: serving because you see it as a way of lining your pockets.

Power: domineering over others.

But rather than these being the source of an elder's authority, his authority comes from being an example to the flock.

And then Peter turns his attention to those who aren't elders

The Crucial Need for Humility

When you're young, you think you know it all. But Peter has more than just those who are young in age in mind. He calls on the church to be subject to the elders. Godly leadership, and godly follower-ship are crucial for a church to prosper and Peter calls for both elders and the church to walk in humility together.