

As we continue in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter we see that Peter switches gears a bit. He is writing to the pilgrims of the dispersion, that is those who have had to flee their homes because of their faith in Christ. But as he writes to these people he is writing to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the church is the people of God, and that is who is writing to.

And so now he addresses the Pastors ... the shepherds of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to 1 Peter 5:1-4 (READ).

We see here that Peter addresses the “elders” who are the Pastors, also called the shepherds of those who Peter is writing to. The world elder in the Greek is “Presbuteros” – from which we get our term Presbyter, which is what I am. I am a Presbyter in the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Peter tells us that he is a “fellow elder”, that is, fellow presbyter – who was also a witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what is interesting is that Peter is also an Apostle, but he identifies himself with those who are elders in the church – that is, again, those pilgrims of the dispersion and their leaders – the elders and shepherds of the local church.

The importance of this passage is that it shows that there is an order in the church that is already established, even before the end of the Apostolic age. The order is established within that first generation after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that order is that in the local church there are elders or Presbyters in charge of the local church who are the pastors or shepherds. The Apostles knew that they would not be around forever, so they placed, by the laying on hands, shepherds in charge of the local body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the term elder implies, these were those who were older and had been trained in the truths of the Gospel.

This is the same thing that we have today – over 2000 years later — we have Pastors or Shepherds – those who lead the local church.

We have to understand the responsibilities of a shepherd. He was completely responsible for the sheep under his care. He had to provide for all the needs of the sheep under his care. Psalm 23 makes this very clear as we see: Psalms 23:1-6: *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”*

We see from this familiar Psalm that the shepherd provides them food and water. He leads them down the right paths so that they will not be in any danger and he protects them from predators – those who would harm them.

Pastor's today, including myself, try to feed you from God's Word, to lead you down the right path and to protect you from false doctrine and teaching. This what is so disturbing today that there are some that call themselves shepherds and are leading the people down the wrong path, they are not protecting from false

doctrine, in fact, they are proponents of false doctrine.

Now consider what Peter says – 1 Peter 5:1 (READ). We see that there is an exhortation from Peter based on the fact that he is a fellow elder and witness to resurrection of Jesus Christ – and the glory that will be revealed at his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. As a result of this he then gives the shepherds, the Pastors, very specific instructions.

As we read in 1 Peter 5:2-3 (READ). Here we see that there is instruction for the local shepherds to lead the churches correctly and the with the right mind. He tells them to serve as “*overseers*”. The interesting thing that we see is that this word translated “*overseers*” is the word *episcopoe*, from which we get the word Episcopal, and our form of government. So Peter is telling the elders or shepherds to exercise their episcopal oversight over the local congregation.

As they are overseeing the local church they are to do it in a certain way. And notice there is both negative and positive exhortations. First he says not by compulsion, but willingly. Those that lead are to do so willingly – in other words they should not be forced into doing it and they should do it joyfully.

He tell tells them that they are not to be doing it for the money – “*not for dishonest gain but eagerly;*” I like the way the King James puts it: “*not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*” I have to tell you, that from a personal point of view, if I was in it for the money, I would have found another profession! I kid people that I get paid weekly, very weakly!

Then he concludes his exhortation with “*nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*” While the office of Pastor/Shepherd is a special one, we are not to exercise dominion or lordship over the flock that God has placed us in charge of. In other words, pastors, such as myself are to not rule by divine fiat.

On the contrary, we are to set an example to the flock. As the prayer for State of Christ’s Church Militant says, we are to set an example in our life and doctrine. Am I perfect – far from it, but I try to do my best. I try to teach you faithfully from the scriptures to let you know what God wants you to know. I try to interpret the scriptures in a way that is clear and practical.

Remember, as I have said on numerous occasions, we live in a world created by God and He has been gracious enough to give us an instruction manual on how to live in the world that He has created AND in the world to come. And it is my job to help you live in this world in obedience to God and His Word and to teach you about the world to come – that is, when we leave this earth.

You have to remember that I don’t do this because I like telling other people what to do ... I don’t do this, obviously, for the money. I do this – as do all faithful shepherds – because that is what we have been called to do.

Listen to some words from the ordination service for Presbyters. The Bishop, in part says: “*Ye have hears, Brethren, as well in your private examination, as in the exhortation which was now made to you and in the holy lessons taken out of the Gospel, and the writings of the Apostles, of what dignity, and how great importance this Office is, whereunto ye are called. And now again, we exhort you, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how weighty an Office and charge ye are called: that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for*

*the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in midst of this sinful world, that they may be saved through Christ forever.*

*Have always therefore printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood."*

Quite a calling and quite a responsibility. And the reason for that is in the last verse that we will look at today – 1 Peter 5:4: "*and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*" When our Savior returns, this is what I trust I will receive.

Again, as we saw last week, our Savior will return. He will return in judgement. As we also saw last week judgement will begin in the house of God – the Church. And then the unbelieving world will be judged.

But we also see, very importantly, that the way of the local church was not left to chance. It was ordained by God through the Apostles, those eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.