

Lesson 8
1 Peter 5 : 1 – 14

Shepherds and Sheep – from Grace to Glory

Memory verse: “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8 NIV)

Times of persecution demand that God’s people have adequate spiritual leadership. If judgment is to begin at God’s house (1 Peter 4:17), then that house had better be in order, or it will fall apart! This explains why Peter wrote this special message to the leaders of the church, to encourage them to do their work faithfully. Leaders who run away in times of difficulty are only proving that they are hirelings and not true shepherds (John 10:12–14).

The New Testament assemblies were organized under the leadership of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3). The words *elder* and *bishop* refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28). The word *bishop* is often translated “overseer” (see 1 Peter 5:2, and note that this title is applied to Christ in 1 Peter 2:25). “Elder” refers to the maturity of the officer, and “bishop” to the responsibility of the office. The word *pastor* (which means “shepherd”) is another title for this same office (Eph. 4:11). The elders were appointed to office (Acts 14:23, where the verb “ordain” means “to appoint by the raising of hands”). Apparently each congregation had the privilege of voting on qualified men.

Peter did not introduce himself in this letter as an apostle or a great spiritual leader, but simply as another elder. However, he did mention the fact that he had personally witnessed Christ’s sufferings (see Matt. 26:36ff). The Greek word translated “witness” gives us our English word *martyr*. We think of a martyr only as one who gives his life for Christ, and Peter did that, but basically, a martyr is a witness who tells what he has seen and heard.

Peter was concerned that the leadership in the local churches be at its best. When the fiery trial would come, the believers in the assemblies would look to their elders for encouragement and direction. He gives us insight into appointing leaders for the church by setting an example himself even when his calling is one of Apostleship.

“It will always be our wisdom, dear friends, to put ourselves as much as we can into the position of those whom we address. It is a pity for anyone ever to seem to preach down to people; it is always better to be as nearly as possible on the same level as they are.” (Spurgeon)

When World War II was being fought, pastor shared that he was a junior high school student, and the fighting seemed very far away from our northern Indiana city. But then the city began to organize Civil Defence units in each neighbourhood, and officials appointed his father an assistant block captain. Often he went with him to watch the training films and listen to the speakers. (The best part of the evening was stopping for an ice cream cone!) But, no matter how many films we watched, we somehow didn’t feel that our neighbourhood was in danger of being bombed. Our philosophy was “It can’t happen here.”

Peter knew that a “fiery trial” was about to occur, and he wanted the entire church family to be prepared. As he closed his letter, Peter gave the church important admonitions to obey if they were to glorify God in this difficult experience.

We may not be in the midst of a fiery persecution today but we better be prepared for it when it comes!

To learn in this lesson: 1) Personal qualities of a pastor 2) Be humble and watchful 3) Be hopeful

Discussion Questions:

1) Using verses 1 to 4, discuss what are the personal qualities that make for a successful pastor? (20 minutes)

2) Peter exhorted his readers to “Be humble and watchful” according to verses 5 to 9. How would the application of these verses help us in our walk with God? (15 minutes)

3) Why did Peter in his closing note reminded his readers to be hopeful when he warned them of troubles ahead in verses 10 to 14 ? (15 minutes)