

The Search of Shepherds - Peter

REVIEW: We have been marching along in our search for shepherds. We have been looking at the development of the office of elder chronologically. We will continue to do so today.

INTRO: This morning I want us to turn our attention toward the apostle Peter. When you think of Peter, what comes to mind. Shout it out.

All good things, and all true of Peter. What I want to do today is a quick survey of Peter's life, and by the end we are going to tie all of this together about elders.

Let's start in John 9:34ff

I. Allow me to give you the background

A. Jesus encountered a man born blind, and healed him

1. The Pharisees (the Jewish religious rulers) questioned this man as to how he could now see, because he had been healed on the Sabbath
2. The Pharisees didn't believe this was true, and didn't even believe that the man was born blind, so they called for his parents
 - a) His parents said, "Yes, this is our son, and yes, he was born blind"
 - b) His parents were scared of the Pharisees and being thrown out of the Temple so they said, "He's a man, ask him"
3. This is where the man gives the greatest testimony in history
 - a) "I can't tell you how my eyes were opened. All I know, ALL I KNOW, is once I was blind, but now I see, and He did it."
 - b) The Pharisees pressed for further answers and the man got a little edgy in his responses - the end result is, the Pharisees threw him out of the Temple
 - c) This is where we pick it up (John 9:34-39 - p. 1075)
 - (1) So first Jesus opens his eyes physically, now they are opened spiritually

B. It's this next part that is so important - Jesus turns his attention to the Pharisees

1. And this is where chapter breaks mess with our understanding of scripture - John 9:40 continues right on into John 10 - it is all a diatribe against the Pharisees
2. Jesus contrasts His ministry with that of the Pharisees - and little doubt the disciples are there with Jesus for all of this
3. Drop down to John 10:11-13
 - a) In the contrast with the Pharisees, they considered themselves spiritual leaders, but they were far from good shepherds

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- (1) The way they handled this blind man and his family displayed more of a desire for power and control than care for the well being of the family
4. Turn to Luke 22:33-34 (p. 1057)
 - a) Here Jesus predicts Peter's denial
 - b) Drop to verses 54-62
5. I have to ask, do you think that Jesus contrast of the good shepherd laying down his life, and the hired hands running away would have changed Peter? Do you think this would be one of those indelible moments that Peter would never forget?
 - a) We will see by the end if Peter remembered this and you tell me
- II. Our second story comes from the upper room - John 13:6 (p. 1080) is where we will pick up in a minute
 - A. On the screen, "Jesus sent Peter and John, saying 'Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover'" - Luke 22:8
 1. So John and Peter are the two people that are to get the room ready to have the Passover meal
 - B. Back in John 13, we know what happens, Jesus grabs a towel and begins to wash the disciples feet - and so we pick it up in verse 6-11
 1. Peter protests that Jesus will never wash his feet
 2. We often think it is merely because Jesus was the Messiah and Peter did not think that He should be doing these kinds of menial tasks
 3. But if you are one of the people in charge of setting up for a special meal that you celebrate once a year, and the custom is to have someone there to wash the feet of the guests
 - a) And you don't have anyone there
 - b) And you don't pick up the towel yourself
 - c) And the Lord picks up the towel instead
 - d) Do you think you might be a little embarrassed?
 - C. Still in the upper room - turn to Luke 22:24-27 (p. 1057)
 1. The disciples are arguing who is to be the greatest in the kingdom
 - a) Now most of us know that James and John (The sons of thunder - people debate if that is a commentary on dad or the kids) are usually the ones starting these debates
 - b) But Peter had to be involved
 2. I want you to note Jesus answer because it will become critical in a little while when we pull all of this together
 - a) Jesus said the kings of the Gentiles "lord it over them"
 - (1) That phrase will be crucial here in a few minutes, so remember it
 - b) But Jesus point to the disciples was to be servants

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- (1) Which I am not sure I ever put two and two together, but while they are in the upper room, Jesus shows them what it means to be a servant
- (2) And maybe an hour or so later, they are arguing about who is the greatest and Jesus has to smack them down with another lesson on servanthood

III. Our third story from the life of Peter is in John 21:15-17 (p. 1089)

A. We have already seen that Peter denied Jesus three times during the story of the crucifixion

1. Here Jesus restores Peter by asking him three times if he loves Him
2. There are some interpretations that walk you down false rabbit trails, and we do not have time, nor is it in the scope of our study to go after these

B. What concerns us here is Jesus message to Peter

1. When Jesus asks “Do you love me more than these” it’s the “more than these” part that is a little difficult to determine what Jesus meant
 - a) There are three natural antecedents for the phrase
 - (1) It could be “Do you love me more than you love the other disciples”
 - (2) It could mean, “Do you love me more than the fishing”
 - (3) Or it could mean, “Do you love me more than the other disciples do”
 - b) Grammatically, the first one makes no sense at all
 - c) The second one, about loving the fishing more than Jesus could be true, but that seems to vilify fishing, and seven of the disciples were fishing, so why single out Peter
 - d) The last one seems to make the most sense grammatically and logically
 - (1) It makes sense logically because if Peter is boasting before that he would die for Jesus, no matter what the rest of the disciples do, Jesus is now looking to see if Peter is true to his word, even after the denial
 - (2) Jesus asks three times to stand in contrast to the three previous denials
2. I think in this exchange, unbeknownst to Peter, he is learning to be a shepherd to leaders
 - a) The reality is, while Peter is standing in the middle of a bunch of shepherds, they still need a shepherd
 - b) That is one fallacy about pastor/shepherds - we have not arrived as if we need no help from others

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- (1) Shepherds never stop being sheep
 - (2) Which means shepherds still need someone to shepherd us
 - c) So Peter's task was to encourage the other disciples
 - (1) And I think one of the very first ways he did that was by this restoration process
 - (2) He was restored, he was encouraged by the Good Shepherd, and so Peter learns how to be an encouragement to other shepherds
- IV. One other story from Peter's life and then we will tie all of these stories together - go back to John 10:16 (p. 1075)
- A. Jesus has already told us He is the Good Shepherd
1. In verse 16 He goes further and tells us that He has "other sheep"
 - a) If you have been around church much, you know who those "other sheep" are
 - b) It's the Gentiles
 - (1) The Jews were very elitist in their view about who God would accept and basically it came down to - God accepts Jews
 - (2) And if you were not a Jew, or at least a convert to Judaism then God will not accept you
 - (3) And by the way, are you excited for the fact that God accepts more than just the Jews?
 - (a) You better be
 - (b) You know who the Gentiles are, don't you?
 - i) That's right, US!!!
 - ii) You better be excited
 2. We won't take time to go into Acts 10 (read it later for yourself), but there, Peter has a vision while on the roof of the house
 - a) Lowered by a sheet are all kinds of animals the Jews are forbidden to eat
 - (1) And a voice tells Peter to kill and eat
 - (2) Peter, of course being a good Jew, objects and says, "no way - nothing unclean has ever entered my mouth"
 - (3) This happened three times and then the sheet was taken back into heaven
 - (4) It left Peter wondering what it all meant
 - b) As he was thinking, the Spirit told him to go downstairs because three guys were looking for him
 - (1) They were sent by Cornelius because an angel told him to go find Peter to hear what he had to say
 - (2) Long story short, Peter went to Cornelius' home, shared the gospel with him, and he accepted Jesus as his Savior

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- (3) Then Peter was able to connect the dots - Other sheep, what was once thought unclean is now clean, Gentiles coming to Jesus
- V. Now, let me tie the life of Peter into this whole concept of eldership
- A. Turn first to 1 Peter 1:1 (p. 1220) - notice what Peter says here
1. To God's elect, scattered through various provinces
 - a) This could mean Jews scattered around the world, but look at 1 Peter 4:3-4 (p. 1223)
 - b) Peter knew that those he is writing to used to live the pagan life - in other words, Gentiles
 - (1) So Peter is including in "God's elect" Gentiles
 2. And now to our main passage to tie this together - 1 Peter 5:1-4 (p. 1223)
 - a) First notice what Peter says here - "To the elders among you"
 - b) Peter in his life, has gone from elitist Jew, to an inclusive member of Christ's church
 - (1) No longer does he discriminate against the Gentiles
 - (2) And imagine how much change it takes for Peter to address these Gentile believers as fellow elders
 - (3) Peter has changed in large and significant ways to get to this place
- B. But continuing in 1 Peter 5 we see some of these other stories coming up from Peter's past, and how they have molded him into the man he was when writing this letter (about 63 AD)
1. Peter has learned from Christ's shepherding metaphor
 2. He encourages the elders to be shepherds of God's flock
- C. Before we dig in to the associations with Peter's life, think about the lessons that Peter is teaching, that he learned from Christ about what an elder does
1. An elder is a shepherd
 - a) A shepherd is a much better term than manager, or even caretaker
 - b) It involves a genuine love for what you are doing
 2. Christians (followers of Christ) are servants
- VI. So, how do the life lessons for Peter factor into eldership? The first one is being a shepherd
- A. We looked at what Peter would have seen when Jesus opened the blind man's eyes
1. The Pharisees were far from loving or caring
 2. They cared more about power and control
 3. They were not tender like a shepherd, leading, guiding or loving
- B. Peter would have seen the contrast that Jesus made between the Pharisees and Himself being the Good Shepherd

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- C. And so here Peter uses this life lesson to encourage fellow elders to be shepherds of God's flock
 - 1. What are some words you think of when you think of shepherds
 - a) Feeding, leading the flock to grazing areas, care, nurture, discipline, seeking, protection
 - b) There are a lot of words
 - 2. Shepherds do not seem to be the type that are just hired hands - they have a love for what they do
 - a) So when Peter ran from standing up with Jesus, after Jesus had already talked about hired hands running from the flock
 - b) Do you think Peter was mixing that into his encouragement for elders of the churches?
 - (1) "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them..."
 - (2) Peter continues, "Not because you must (hired hands), but because you are willing, as God wants you to be..."
 - c) It is becoming obvious that Peter's life, and the lessons that were so difficultly learned are displaying in his theology later in life

VII. Second, we see Peter use two of the life lessons together from the upper room

A. Eager to serve

- 1. We mentioned earlier how the host, or one who prepares for the Passover celebration would be obligated to wash the feet, or have someone to wash the feet of the dinner guests
- 2. Peter and John failed to do so, and there was a bit of embarrassment probably going on when Jesus stood up to wash everyone's feet
- 3. While I cannot promise you that this event was going through his mind when he wrote this, it certainly could have been
 - a) The whole lesson from Jesus was to be servants
 - b) So Peter's failure to be eager to serve this way probably was on his mind
- 4. And this is the role of an elder - be eager to serve - be looking for ways in which you can help the Body of Christ
- 5. Personally I think these illustrations from the life of Peter help us go from concept about an elder's role to a greater understanding of an elder's role in the church

B. The second lesson from the upper room was along the same line

- 1. Everyone remember that phrase I told you to remember? "lord it over them"
- 2. Just after Peter says "be eager to serve" what does he say - start of verse 3 - "not lording it over those entrusted to you"

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3. Remember that Peter was probably a teenager when he was hanging out with Jesus
 - a) Do you think he got that phrase somewhere in those formative years?
 - b) In the midst of Jesus lesson on servanthood, He tells them that servants that follow Him do not lord it over people - or they do not hold their position of authority over people
4. Here Peter is telling us the same thing - elders do not behave that way
 - a) Elders do not hold their position of authority over others - as in "I'm in charge so do what I say"
 - b) No, elders are the first to jump up and serve - elders may have authority, but they only bust it out in extreme circumstances
 - (1) I have told you before that I understand that because of our church's structure, many decisions stop with me
 - (2) But it is very rare circumstances that I pull out my authority and say "I'm the Pastor and I said so!"
 - c) This is how elders are to operate, and the life of Peter is shining brightly in his theology

VIII. Finally, Peter encourages us to be examples to the flock

- A. This is, admittedly, the most loosely based one in Peter's life, but you can see some connection
 1. Peter says, "be examples to the flock"
 2. Peter himself was an example to the disciples of what grace really is
 - a) He denied Jesus three times - and there is little doubt that would have made it around to the disciples
 - (1) Granted the other disciples all ran much earlier
 - (2) However, it is not recorded that they openly denied Christ
 - b) And the story in John 21 we see Jesus restore Peter with love and grace
 - c) He becomes a living example to the "flock"
 - (1) He is an example of the gospel
 - (2) He sinned
 - (3) Jesus asks him for the confession of his heart
 - (4) Three times
 - (5) And Peter displays where his heart really was
- B. The other way in which Peter exemplifies this idea of being an example to the flock is by being a shepherd to other shepherds
 1. Here is where you can see this more so than in John 21 - look back at 1 Peter 5:1
 2. Peter says, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder"

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3. Amongst the other elders, Peter is not considering himself better than the other elders - he is encouraging them from being along side the other elders
 4. While there is little doubt that Peter held a place of prominence among the other disciples, and in many ways you can consider him a leader of the disciples
 - a) Here is where you really see his heart
 - b) His desire to come alongside fellow elders to teach and encourage
 5. We said it earlier - even as elders, you never stop being a sheep
 - a) That means there is always room to learn
 - b) Always room to grow
 - c) Always room to refine rough edges of character that need to be conformed to Christ
- C. So what does this means for elders
1. Elders can serve as examples of God's grace
 - a) Peter's denial was very public
 - b) But so was Peter's restoration
 - c) When an elder does sin (and that happens) than his life can be a display of the gospel
 - (1) Repentance
 - (2) Restoration
 - (3) Grace
 - (4) Forgiveness
 2. Elders also can come along side one another
 - a) Helping each other to grow
 - b) One story we did not mention was, even with all of his prominence, Peter still made mistakes
 - (1) Paul had to call Peter out about stopping eating with the Gentiles when certain Jews came
 - (2) It made Peter a better man
 - (3) And that is what needs to happen with elders today
 - (a) Lovingly coming along side and helping one another see errors and mistakes
 - (b) That way we can continue to be an example of the grace of God to the entire flock

CONCLUSION: I think it is awesome how you can see the events that shaped Peter come out in his theology later in life. And the fact that those events help shape our understanding of eldership - well that is the Holy Spirit at work.

Two more weeks on eldership, and then we will take a break for a bit.