

THE PROFILE OF A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Westside Bible Church

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In His Personal Ministry

When a teacher or speaker stands up to speak, the listeners ask themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously, three questions:

1. Can I trust you? This is a matter of character.
2. Do you care about me? This is a question of compassion.
3. Do you know what you are talking about? This is a question of content.

I. In the Imitation of Christ (1 Peter 5:1–4)

- A. The leadership (Elders/authority; overseers/responsibility; shepherds/care and ministry).
- B. The perspective—present sufferings/future glory and reward.
- C. Not by compulsion, or for gain, nor for power—but voluntary, eagerly, and exemplary.

This is a matter of character.

II. With the Motivation of Christ (Matthew 9:35–38)

A shepherd sees the whole flock but is always concerned for individual sheep. Jesus saw in the multitudes the weariness, fear, anxiety, and the hopelessness of individuals.

The issue here is compassion.

III. The Personal Blessings of a Faithful Shepherd (Psalm 23)

Here we see the goals of the personal ministry of the Great Shepherd.

Context

1. Psalm 22—the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) lays down His life for sheep.
2. Psalm 23—the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20–21) supplies our needs.
3. Psalm 24—the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) returns with rewards.

Content

What is described in this Psalm is the gratitude and blessing enjoyed by the individual sheep (David) provided by the shepherd's care.

1. Introduction into the doctrine of the grace of God (v. 1).
Motorcycle crash/restoration, before I ever came to Westside.
2. Entrance into the faith-rest life (v. 2).
Deliverance from legalism/guilt in many private sessions.
3. Restoration and guidance into the way (doctrine/Christian Way of Life) (v. 3).
Faithful teaching rescues from error and clarifies spiritual life.
4. The security of both discipline and defense (v. 4).
The rod protects and the staff corrects—equips the soul to face death, making it easier to face the threats and dangers of life.
5. Spiritual maturity to engage in the battle (v. 5).
One must have resources to fight: “table” = sound doctrine; “anointing” = ministry of Holy Spirit, “cup.”
6. The blessing and power of knowing grace and truth (v. 6).
John taught faithfulness of God, the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

Now, the character and compassion are matched with content that is scriptural and spiritually useful.

Profile of a Faithful Shepherd

Review

When a teacher stands before a group, three questions arise in the minds of those present: Can I **trust** you? Do you **care** about me? Do you **know** what you are talking about?

The first question has to do with **character**. The second has to do with **compassion**. The third relates to **content**.

Aristotle found, upon evaluating the dominant teachers of his day, that each was lacking in one area or another.

1. He said that Socrates was lacking in **ethos** (character).
Though a proven warrior at the Battle of Delium and a philosopher, Socrates had a habit of annoying people. He even said of himself that he was a “gadfly” to the people of Athens.
2. Plato, he found, was lacking in **pathos** (compassion).
To be right, and yet to be uncaring, is of little help to people.
3. The sophists (called “wise men” or “sages” who taught for a fee) were lacking in **logos** (content). They loved to speculate on theories and philosophical “mysteries,” but offered little in the way of practical or useful counsel.

From this study, Aristotle concluded that the best teachers were those who could combine all three areas of what was known as virtue (*arête*). We find these same qualities were critical for biblical teachers:

1. In 1 Peter 5:1–4, Peter stresses the **character** of the under-shepherds.
2. In Matthew 9:35–34, Jesus’ **compassion** for individuals and their needs, is clear.
3. In speaking of the Lord as his shepherd (Psalm 23), David identifies the **content** of spiritual supply, illustrated by earthly analogies, that provides for the needs of the soul. The Lord, working through prophets like Nathan and Gad, supplied David with these blessed truths. A parallel to these blessings is found in Romans 5:6–11.
 - a) The promises relating to the faith-rest life (Psalm 23: 1–2).
 - b) The way of spiritual recovery and restoration fellowship (v. 3a).
 - c) Guidance for the life of faith and productivity (v. 3b).
 - d) Assurance and stability, the victory of faith over fear, for the dark times of trial and tribulation (v. 4).
 - e) How to lay hold of spiritual resources, identify the plan of God, and maintain inner joy in the spiritual battle (v. 5).
 - f) The assurance of blessings in time and reward in eternity (v. 6).

In His Public Ministry (1 Thessalonians 2)

First Thessalonians is a beautiful synopsis of how the work of a faithful shepherd can bear fruit in the lives of diligent students of the Word of God.

There are two “bookends” to this epistle that illustrate the blessings of a faithful shepherd in the lives of those who are recipients of his ministry:

1. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:8, we see the triune virtues of faith, hope, and love. How amazing is it that our faith has to do with **content**, our hope is designed to build **character**, and our love is the basis for genuine **compassion**.
2. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9, Paul alludes to our “*blessed hope*” (Titus 2:13) that we will not enter into the time of “*wrath*,” the tribulation. Since Paul uses “wrath” to also include the judicial consequences of sinful behavior (Rom. 1:18–32), we can also conclude that if we live faithful/spiritual lives, we can avoid this judicial wrath in our lives (Rom. 5:9–10). Since the wrath of God is directed against sinful behavior, when we choose to live sinful lives, we will surely suffer those consequences.

I. The Character (*ethos*) of the Shepherd (1 Thessalonians 2:1–6)

In these verses, Paul reviews his ministry among them in the face of past and present persecutions (see Acts 16 and 17). In spite of his trials and needs, he had conducted himself with utmost integrity among them.

- A. Paul’s visit was not in vain (void of impact/effect) because of his character and conduct (v. 1)
- B. Instead of being intimidated by persecution, he was bold to speak the truth of the gospel message (v. 2).
- C. His ministry was free from any error, false motives, or deception. Remember that these are things Peter warned about in 1 Peter 5:2 and again in 2 Peter 2:1–3, 10–20.

- D. His motive was always to please God who had entrusted him with his message and ministry (v. 4).
- E. There was no desire for personal gain or glory from men. He even avoided asking for the support that he had a right to expect (vv. 5–6).

It is evident that Paul could call on the Thessalonians as witnesses, as well as God Himself, that his labors were entirely spiritual in nature. His character (*ethos*) and conduct were impeccable.

II. The Compassion (*pathos*) of the Shepherd (1 Thessalonians 2:7–12, 17)

There are three very descriptive analogies used by Paul in this section to illustrate his deep care and concern for the Thessalonians. Each of these speaks of love and care, but the three examples also illustrate compassion, character, and content.

1. The love of a nursing mother (vv. 7–10).
The word translated “*cherishes*” is *thalpo*, and is used only here and Ephesians 5:29 in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, it is used in Deuteronomy 22:6 for a bird warming her eggs. It speaks of tender compassion.
2. The instruction and example of a father (vv. 11–12).
The father shows his care for his children both by his example and his instruction. The ultimate goal of all Bible teaching is to bring the believer to a level of spiritual maturity, which is demonstrated by those who “*walk worthy of God*” (see Eph. 4:1). The word used here is *axios*, a word picture of balancing the scales between our position in Christ and our practice in daily life.
3. The longing of an orphaned child (v. 17).
The phrase “*having been taken away from you*” is from *apo* (away from) and *orphanizo*, speaking of a child having lost its parents, or one removed by force from his or her family.

In each of these examples we see a different form of love and care. Each one speaks of a unique aspect of compassionate concern for them.

III. The Content (*logos*) of the Shepherd (1 Thessalonians 2:13–16)

The Bible makes it very clear that the life of the believer on this earth is a combination of present sufferings, and future glory (see again 1 Pet. 5:1). God is faithful to provide for us everything we need to live victorious lives here and now, and to give assurance of His approval and reward in eternity.

1. Maturity and conformity to Jesus Christ begins with a right reception of the Word of God in faith and humility (v. 13).
2. The Word of God received in faith “*effectively works*” in us by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 13b; see also 1:5).
3. Inner conformity to Christ is manifested in outward imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those ministers and fellow believers who demonstrate His character (v. 14a; see also 1:6–10).

4. Genuine spiritual growth is always met with varying degrees of persecution (vv. 14b–16). [Note that the whole epistle of First Peter is written to address how believers are to overcome this opposition.]
5. Those who resist and seek to suppress the truth of God’s Word (Rom. 1:18ff), will inevitably suffer His wrath (v. 16). Paul here is most likely referring to the coming calamities of 70 A.D.

Conclusion (1 Thessalonians 2:18–20)

We must never forget that we are engaged in a spiritual war with the forces of Satan (v. 18). There will be times when God, in His infinite wisdom, allows evil to prosper and His people to suffer.

Our ultimate prospect, however, is eternal glory and—if we remain faithful—eternal reward. The “*crown of rejoicing*” mentioned here and anticipated by Paul and his missionary team relates to the “*crown of glory*” we saw in 1 Peter 5:4. It is the visible manifestation throughout all eternity of the Lord’s commendation, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Whatever our individual gift and ministry may be, we should all be striving for a rewardable future in the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To do so, we must live genuinely (*ethos*), love deeply (*pathos*), and think clearly (*logos*). These are the elements of a balanced, spiritual life—one of faith, hope, and love.