

**Studies in 1 Peter**  
**The need for leadership in suffering**  
**1 Peter 5:1-5**

**Intro: This morning I talked about some of the great persecutions that God's people faced in the first century. It was a time of unprecedented difficulty for the people of God and it was a time that called for strong and wise leadership.**

**In such a book it is not surprising to read the instructions found in the first 5 verses of chapter 5. As God's people live together in a hostile world, they need the strength and encouragement of the effective working of the leadership God designed for the church and in the mutual relationship of love and respect for one another.**

**What kind of leaders do churches need? What is their work? What motivates them? And what should our attitude be toward them? These are the questions Peter answers in this section:**

**TO THE ELDERS (v. 1-4)**

*Peter's remarks to the elders are prefaced with three thoughts:*

**He was an elder! Peter writes from the experience of one who has given God's people leadership.**

*Roman Catholicism maintains that Peter was the first pope; and that he was bishop of the church at Rome. It is interesting that the only time that Peter ever referred to himself as an overseer he did so as a part of a group of men. "a fellow-elder". There were other men who occupied the same role as Peter where he served as an elder!*

**Witness of the sufferings of Christ. Calls attention to his apostleship and one who had known the Lord personally. He was qualified to speak to them about suffering, since he had seen the Lord's suffering.**

**Partaker of the glory to be revealed...conveys Peter's own confidence of a right relationship with the Lord that made him have the hope of heaven and it affirms the common goal that Peter shared with his hearers of God's heavenly reward.**

*The Elder's Role*

**Shepherd the flock of God among you...**

*"Feed" (kjk) means occupy the role of a shepherd. It describes the loving care and concern that the elders have for the flock! (Cf. Ps. 23)*

Attends the spiritual needs of the flock—I shall not want

Provision of spiritual food –He leads me in green pastures and beside still waters

Restoration of the fallen—He restores my soul  
Guidance—He leads me in paths of righteousness for  
His name's sake  
Protection—Yes, though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death I will fear no evil.  
Provide assurance—Rod (to guide) and staff (to retrieve  
the fallen)  
Here in the word fear we see the prevailing idea of  
teaching, discipline, and watchfulness for what is  
spiritually dangerous. It is all work and not much about  
power, except in the sense of providing what is needed  
for the people. The classic definition of a bad shepherd  
entails a self-serving approach to people that abuses  
and does what is to their disadvantage because it is not  
in keeping with the wishes or the advantage of the  
shepherd (Eze. 34:1-6)

*The flock of God is the church. And elders shepherd or feed the flock among them. The extent of their oversight and work is the local church. This text along with the one in Ac. 20:28 and others points to a principle that suggests that elders exercise leadership and oversight within congregations and not over other churches.*

#### **Taking the oversight**

*From episcopo "to watch over", the noun form is the word "overseer" or "bishop".*

*From this we learn that a bishop was not a separate class of men from elders but the term was used to describe what elders do! They oversee the flock of God. This word suggests the elder's role as a watcher of souls, protecting them from danger.*

#### ***The nature of the elder's leadership***

***He must not have a grasping hand, or a swelling head, a dragging foot!***

**Not under compulsion--not forced, pressed upon one No one who must have service to others pressed upon them has a servant's heart. A servant by nature wants to help others because he loves them.**

**But voluntarily--that is growing out of a willingness that comes from wanting to do God's will and wanting to serve others.**

**Not for sordid gain--not motivated by monetary gain.**

*The right of the church to pay elders who teach is established in 1 Tim. 5:17. Yet, the elder like the preacher who teaches should never be motivated to do God's work for monetary motives! (We have no obligation to keep such a man as poor as possible to prevent that!) Nor should he think of the*

*eldership as a position of influence from which to gain advantage in some other way.*

**But with eagerness--inner devotion**

**Not lording it over**—It would appear that Peter is thinking of the statement Jesus once made to his disciples about their relationship with one another (Mt. 20). He pointed out that Gentile rulers “lord it over” their subjects. They exist as autocratic rulers who have authority over others, commanding and expecting to be obeyed. And they may even do so with benevolent purposes. (They wanted to be called “Benefactors”, that is, rulers who did good things for you.)

Oberst quotes Barnes who comments on this concept: “It refers to that kind of jurisdiction which civil rulers or magistrates exercise. This is an exercise of authority, as contra-distinguished from the **influence of erason, persuasion, and example**”.

But Jesus says, this whole spirit is contrary to kingdom principles. The kingdom of God is not founded on such concepts of hierarchal control even when it is well-intended. It is not founded on the right to tell others what to do; but is founded instead on a servant’s outlook, where the leader himself shares with the people in the work, showing them the way.

“The boss says “go”; the leader says, “let’s go!”. And so Peter’s contrasting remark reflects this concept.

**But proving to be examples to the flock**--examples means "a print left as an impression after a blow as been struck". Elders are shepherds, not cowboys. A single man can lead sheep anywhere; dozens cannot drive them! The elders job is to set the pace, to show the way, to hold up his own life as an example for others to follow. The church will rise to the level of its leadership. A real leader says, “Follow me and the people follow; because they know he cares about them and wants only what is best for them and he is willing to do what he asks them to do”. These are the kind of men that get God’s people through hard times.

Some practical observations about leadership are evident here:

*Isn't it amazing that churches can appoint men to the eldership on the basis of an arbitrary application of 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 who have never shown a shepherd's care over the flock of God? To some degree elders are not chosen in order to care for God's flock, but because they care for the God's flock. Appointment to eldership does not have some magical power to make unconcerned men become caring shepherds. So to all who aspire to be elders we would say, “Show us that you care for us and that you will not misuse your privilege of leadership so that we might be afraid of you; and it will be easy for us to make you leaders and follow you.”*

*How do we encourage men to become qualified to be elders?*

We show them the importance of growing in their own spiritual life, becoming strong, committed and knowledgeable in the word.

We teach them to show initiative in God's work. Be busy in the kingdom not because you are made to but because you are committed to what is right.

We teach them to serve for the good of others not for their own benefit.

We teach them how to lead people through persuasion rather than lord it over them through the sheer force of authority.

They are the product of the natural spiritual growth and development of a congregation. They are the product of study and prayer and service. Where those elements are not characteristic of the people as a whole there will not be elders!

*What motivates such a man? It is not the feeling of having been "honored or recognized" by the church for years of service. It is not the quest for power or control over others. It is simply the reward of the chief shepherd who will bless each of us for our care for His flock with a reward far greater than any man can bestow—the crown of life. "Stephanos" refers to the wreath or prize given those who successfully competed and won in the games.*

#### **TO THE YOUNGER (v. 5)**

*Perhaps the younger are singled out because of the typical inclination of younger people to fail to appreciate the wisdom and experience of age.*

**Some conclude that elders is used here in the general sense.**

**Others think the reference is to the elders of the local church. In this context it seems to me the idea is an extension of the first 5 verses.**

**Younger people are urged to appreciate the experience and wisdom and advice of those who in devotion to the Lord have been appointed as elders.**

*Be subject translates a common NT verse for arranging yourself under the leadership of another. Used already by Peter to describe respect for government, masters, husbands.*

*All of us need to cultivate the attitude to respect the thinking and suggestions of those spiritually more mature! This is not an arbitrary, age 50 has preference over age 30; or 70 over 50; but rather experience that is commensurate with age should be respected.*

*All of us need to develop good "fellowship"--an ability to see the wisdom and value in the suggestions of those with experience.*

#### **TO ALL (v. 5)**

*Clothe yourselves with humility.*

"Gird" perhaps recalls the Lord's own actions in which Peter was so very much involved, when Jesus arose to put on a servant's attire and wash the feet of his disciples. Peter protested. But the Lord insisted that only through learning that lesson of humility could Peter ever have any fellowship with him. He urged them to do as he had done. The issue was not foot-washing but rather humility.

*Peter had learned the lesson and now applies the lesson to his readers. Be humble with each other! "Not far above the ground".*

*To serve one another*

**Conclusion:** Peter's message is an important one. As we face a hostile world, we need to learn to work together in harmony and mutual concern. There must arise among the people of God leaders who care for the flock in times of suffering. Peter here gives us a beautiful picture of their character and work.

**Who will occupy this role among us? Let him earn the right to lead by loving service of the members here.**