

## The Church – The Leadership of the Church I Pet. 5:1-4

*Thesis: To give us a better understanding of the duty and responsibility of the elders.*

### Introduction:

- A. The leadership in the church is one of the most misunderstood teachings in the New Testament.
  - 1. Most churches in the denominational world have one man (often called the “pastor”) who rules over the flock.
  - 2. They will also have a board of “deacons” who supervise the “pastor.”
  - 3. This type of rule of the church is never found in the New Testament.
    - a. The head of the church is Christ, and it is His authority that we follow (Eph. 5:23-24).
    - b. On this earth, we have elders who lead and shepherd His church.
      - 1) Acts 20:28 (Paul speaking to the elders of the church from Ephesus in Miletus) - Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
      - 2) Titus 1:5 - For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you--
      - 3) Even in our text, we read that the elders are the overseers of the church (I Pet. 5:2-4).
    - c. It is also important to note that the eldership is always plural, signifying more than one elder.
- B. Notice some things that the eldership is not.
  - 1. The eldership is not a board of directors.
  - 2. They are not a group of men who desire to make worship and life hard on the members of the church.
  - 3. They are not a group of men who simply tell the preacher what to do.
- C. In our text, Peter identifies himself as an elder in the Lord’s church (5:1).
  - 1. Peter was one who often got himself into trouble with his tongue.
  - 2. However, because of his faithfulness to Christ and his commitment to His church, Peter was able to become an elder.
  - 3. It is also implied that Peter met the qualifications of an elder (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

## I. Elders are encouraged to shepherd the flock (5:2).

### A. Notice some of the responsibilities that a shepherd has over their flock.

1. A shepherd is responsible for feeding the sheep.
  - a. Sheep would not be able to find food unless the shepherd leads them to it.
  - b. In the same way, elders are to feed the church with the word of God.
    - 1) Elders are responsible for making sure that the proper teaching is done within the church.
    - 2) Because the elders are the overseers, with the responsibility of the flock, they must make sure that the truth is being taught.
2. A shepherd is responsible for protecting the sheep.
  - a. A shepherd would have to defend their sheep from enemies.
    - 1) A shepherd must be willing to give their life for the sheep.
    - 2) **Jn. 10:10-13** (Jesus speaking as the good shepherd) - **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. { 11 } I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. { 12 } But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. { 13 } The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.**
  - b. Today, elders are responsible for protecting the church from false doctrine.
    - 1) **Titus 1:9-14** - **holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. { 10 } For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, { 11 } whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. { 12 } One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." { 13 } This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, { 14 } not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.**
      - 2) There is more at stake than just a physical life.
      - 3) This (in my opinion) is the most important duty of the elders.
3. Shepherd must understand that the sheep will follow him.
  - a. Sheep are not known for their intelligence.
    - 1) They will follow their leader every time.

- 2) If the shepherd wanted to, he could lead his sheep off the edge of a cliff and the sheep would follow.
  - 3) **Jn. 10:3-5** (Jesus speaking as the good shepherd) - **To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. {4} And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. {5} Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.**
- b. The same is true with elders and their flock.
- 1) They must remember that the sheep are going to follow them.
  - 3) Because of this, the elders must be wise as to where they lead the church.

**B. As they shepherd the flock, elders must remember that it is God's flock that they are responsible for.**

1. When they realize that it is God's flock and not their own, they will work harder to fulfill their responsibilities.
2. No matter how frustrating the work of the elders may get, they must remember that they are dealing with God's people.
3. When they remember that the church is God's people, they will work diligently with them because they know that there is eternity involved.

**II. Elders are to shepherd the flock of God with pure motives (5:2-3).**

**A. Peter points out negative motives that an elder is not to have.**

1. Elders are not to serve "by compulsion" (5:2).
  - a. Elders should not feel forced to serve as an elder.
  - b. Remember, one of the requirements for being an elder is to desire the position (I Tim. 3:1).
2. Elders are not to serve "for dishonest gain" (5:2).
  - a. No one should become an elder for the money.
  - b. For this reason, one of the requirements of being an elder is to not be "greedy for money" (I Tim. 3:3).
3. Elders are not to be "lords over" the church (5:3).
  - a. No one should become an elder so that they can have power over others.
  - b. Remember, the flock does not belong to the elders.
    - 1) The flock belongs to God.
    - 2) When elders lose sight of this simple fact, they begin to rule with an iron fist.
    - 3) This makes the flock not want to be under their rule and authority.

**B. Peter also points out the positive motives that an elder should have.**

1. Elders are to serve willingly and eagerly (5:2).
  - a. Elders should want to be elders.
  - b. It should be something that they strive to do.

- c. Whenever we do something because we want to, we will be better at it.
- d. The same is true when it comes to serving as an elder.
- 2. When elders serve willingly and eagerly, they will serve well because they are serving the Lord.
  - a. **Ecc. 9:10a** - Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.
  - b. **Col. 3:17** - And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

### III. Elders are to be an example to the flock (5:3).

#### A. Elders must meet certain qualifications before they can become an elder (I Tim. 3:1-7).

- 1. There are 17 qualifications that are mentioned.
- 2. These qualifications take a lifetime of work to achieve.
- 3. It is also important to notice that all Christians should strive to fulfill most of those qualifications.
  - a. Only two - husband of one wife and ruling his own house well - are not required to be a faithful Christian (obviously, others will take time to develop as a Christian, for example: being a novice).
  - b. The point is that the elders should be examples to us in their daily life.
- 4. We should be able to see the qualifications for an elder in their lives.

#### B. More than anything, elders should be an example to the flock.

- 1. Paul often noted the importance of following a good example.
  - a. **I Cor. 11:1** - Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.
  - b. **Phil. 3:17, 20-21** - Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. {20} For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, {21} who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.
- 2. The key is to follow the example of Christ.

### Conclusion:

When elders serve the church properly, they will have a great reward from the “Chief Shepherd” (5:4).

Are we, as members of the Lord’s church, doing what we can to help the elders as they serve?