

- I. I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. I Peter 5:1-4 . . . Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, [2] shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; [3] nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. [4] And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - B. Pray
- II. An Exhortation to Elders
 - A. Before looking at Peter's exhortation to the elders or leaders of the churches reading his letter, I want to read through Paul's words about church elders to give us a more comprehensive view of what the scriptures say about this topic.
 1. I Timothy 3:1-7 . . . It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. [2] An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. [4] He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [5] (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), [6] and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. [7] And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.
 2. Titus 1:6-9 . . . namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. [7] For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, [8] but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, [9] holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he

will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

- B. When we compare Peter and Paul's lists, we find that –
1. Peter exhorts his elders to rise to a high level of selflessness and spiritual maturity, whereas Paul is establishing the requirements for those who fill the position of elder.
 2. Both Peter and Paul speak about the position and work of elders or church leaders as requiring a level of spiritual maturity that can be measured in the elder's personal life, within the elder's home, within the church, and in the community. In other words, the requirements are not a mystery or difficult to discern, but specific, identifiable, and measurable.
 3. Both Peter and Paul speak about the position in terms of serving rather than ruling, requiring humility as opposed to pride, and being an example of what they are teaching, leading, and assisting the rest of the church to be. Of course, to be an example, one must already be living what he or she is teaching, leading, and assisting the rest of us to be.
 4. Peter adds something Paul does not mention, and that is the rewards for serving in this way in the church.
- C. I Peter 5:1 . . . Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,
1. Peter speaks as one in authority and yet as an equal. If the leaders of the church are to follow in Christ's footsteps, then they must take on Christ's humility and Christ's servant-mindedness.
 - a. Pastors, Elders, and church leaders are certainly given the task of leading – in fact, Paul exhorts leaders to lead with diligence (Romans 12:8).
 - b. And yet, if Elders are to follow in the footsteps of Christ, they must first and foremost be servants of God, and then servants of the people.
 - c. In other words, Pastors, elders, and church leaders in general, may have the position, the privilege, and the right of leadership, but it is their duty to have a humble attitude and a servant's heart.
 2. The reason for this is that true Christianity, true love of God and neighbor, and growing spirituality that continues to bring more and

more Christ-likeness into each Christian's life will not thrive where there is pride and authoritarian leadership within the ranks of the elders, pastors, and other church leaders.

3. Paul also addressed this issue of pride and authoritarian leadership, and he makes it clear that one of the significant factors behind such spiritually harmful behavior is the length of time someone has been a Christian.
 - a. Now the scriptures do not present this as the only factor to guard against in relation to pride and authoritarian attitudes among elders, but it is a significant factor and one we ought to support.
 - b. We read Paul's warning in I Timothy 3:6 . . . "and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited (*think too highly of himself*) and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."
4. New converts are easily led into pride or authoritarian leadership for several reasons.
 - a. One reason is because of the tend to think that since they have been given an important position, they themselves must be important.
 - b. Another reason is that they may think that since they have been given the position of elder, it must mean they have risen to a level of spiritual maturity that is above the rest, which is reason enough to feel superior.
 - c. A third reason is that they may think that since they have been given a position of power, they have the right to exercise that power. Yet because of their spiritual immaturity and inexperience in applying God's truths in practical ways and in a variety of circumstances, they then lack the humility, the compassion, and the grace to exercise power wisely.
5. In I Timothy 3:6, Paul points out that should an elder or church leader give way to pride, he is setting himself up to incur the same condemnation from God that the devil brought upon himself.

D. I Peter 5:2a . . . shepherd the flock of God among you,

1. The first truth to see in this statement is that the church – and that includes the people in it – belong to God, not to the pastor or elders or Bible Study leader or any other church leader.
 - a. In fact, pastors and elders and church leaders of any sort are not even at the head of the church, Christ is!
 - b. And so, whatever work we do for the church, we are first and foremost doing it for God – which implies a variety of things, but

- one of them is that we are servants working for a master, and not masters or owners being served or obeyed by the church.
2. The second truth found here is that elders and leaders are to shepherd the flock – which means we are to care for them. Two examples of caring for the flock are –
 - a. Leading them to the kind of spiritual food and drink that promotes growth toward the best spiritual health and maturity possible.
 - b. Guarding them from harm – such as (1) self-inflicted harm, (2) harm caused by others in the church through such things as conflict, competitiveness, pride, careless or unkind words, anger, resentment, and jealousy, and (3) harm brought into the church from outside the church.
 3. Now, shepherding or caring for the flock requires leadership skills, some management skills, people skills, some knowledge of human behavior, knowing the sheep you are shepherding, and qualities such as compassion, patience, tenderness, and gentleness so that when you speak truth to the people, your speech is both honest and loving.
 4. But shepherding also requires –
 - a. knowing God personally, knowing the scriptures and how to apply them in very practical ways to a variety of situations, pursuing godliness in the way you want the church to pursue it, and growing spiritually in ways that keeps your spiritual growth ahead of the rest of the church so you know how to get to where you are leading them.
 - b. Pastors, elders, and church leaders cannot lead where they haven't been. They cannot adequately teach what they do not know. They cannot show how to apply God's word in practical ways if they are not already applying it in those ways themselves. And they cannot bring the people to intimacy with God if they are not intimate with Him.
 - c. In addition, shepherding requires prayer, much prayer, for yourself and for the people.
 - d. And finally, I believe shepherding requires a longing for God to be supreme, for God's word to be obeyed, for God's name to be honored, for God's kingdom to be enlarged, and for God's presence to be cherished.

E. I Peter 5:2b . . . exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God;

1. The idea here is well expressed by a portion of scripture that is directed toward financial giving, yet it expresses a principle that we are wise to apply in the broadest of ways to the Christian life. And that scripture is II Corinthians 9:7 . . . Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
 2. Though God is sovereign and Lord of lords, and though we owe Him our trust, obedience, allegiance, and love, He does not exercise authoritarian leadership, but rather invites, exhorts, and speaks to us in ways that seek our willing submission and love.
 3. You see, God allows us to choose what we will do so that what we do for Him has the greatest possible chance of being done from a willing and cheerful heart.
 - a. For example, the one who finds the treasure in the field and sells all that he has in order to purchase the field and gain the treasure, does so because he values the treasure that much.
 - b. Those who are forced to sell all to purchase the field are not doing so out of a longing to gain the treasure, but out of a longing to avoid the cost of disobedience.
 - c. The first motive is the motive of love in action. The second is the motive of selfishness in action, and surely you can see how elders and leaders driven by the motive of love will do far more good for the church than even the most gifted and charismatic leaders leading under compulsion.
- F. I Peter 5:2c . . . and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
1. Interestingly, Peter's exhortation to serving willingly is followed by an exhortation to guard against motives that are seeking some advantage for ourselves as leaders.
 2. Of course, there are the usual examples of "sought for advantages" when it comes to leadership positions, such as fame, fortune, and power. But we can add to that list the seeking of prestige, wanting a sense of importance, enjoying the privileges of leadership, and having a place to exercise your leadership abilities when the world won't give you that opportunity.
- G. I Peter 5:3 . . . nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.
1. I have mentioned the problem of elders and pastors and others in leadership seeking power, but Peter points it out specifically here.

There is something about power that is attractive to certain people. Some of us simply love being in charge or being able to make the final decision or telling others what to do or having the privileges that go along with positions of power.

2. However, holding a position of power is a powerful test of our honesty, humility, justice, compassion, patience, and tenderness. If church leaders want power, it is most likely because they are lacking the qualities of honesty, humility, justice, compassion, and patience.
3. So I remind you again, we are called to be like Christ, who himself said, "I am among you as one who serves."
4. Which brings us to the last exhortation of proving to be examples to the flock. This statement makes two powerful points.
 - a. First, we cannot prove we are examples by claiming to be. The proof of what we are as church leaders is in the way we live and lead, day in and day out. So to prove ourselves examples, we must live lives that are an example of what we believe and an example of where we want to lead the people.
 - b. Second, to be an example, we must already have attained the qualities, maturity, understanding of God's word, application of God's word, prayer life, purity of heart, godliness of life and such as these that we are leading the people toward. We must be out in front of them – not just as leaders, but as leaders who have already learned the lessons, or at least are well on our way to learning the lessons we want the flock to learn.

H. I Peter 5:4 . . . And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1. The work of a godly, sincere minded elder is not glamorous, but the reward for that work is glorious.
2. The work of a godly, sincere minded elder is hard, but the reward is unfading – that is, it is eternal!
3. There will be some, or even many in the church who will not appreciate the leadership of a godly, sincere minded elder, but God appreciates it, and He shows His appreciation by rewarding such work.

III. Conclusion

- A. So, elders and church leaders, do not despair in the work. Keep your heart and mind directed toward God and cheerfully do what God has given you to do, and in the end, you will be glad you did.