

# THE DUTIES OF THE ELDER OR MINISTER

## 1 PETER 05:01–04

### *Introduction*

This is a critical passage. It is a personal message from Peter to the elders and ministers of the church. Never is the church in need of leadership any more than when it is being attacked and persecuted. At such times, the ministers must stand forth and be more vigilant than ever.

- I. Peter stresses his right to be heard (v. 1).
- II. The charge: Shepherd, care for the flock of God (vv. 2-3).
- III. The result: A crown of glory (v. 4).

### **I. 1 Peter 05:01 Peter, an Elder Called by God**

Peter stresses his right to be heard and the importance of listening to him. Peter was deeply concerned for the believers of God's church. They were being persecuted and savagely attacked by the wolves of this world. They were just like sheep under attack, sheep who needed the pastoral care of the shepherd. This is the reason Peter writes this exhortation to the leaders of the church. The top leader was the elder or minister; he was the person most responsible for the church. He was the person who needed to take the lead in facing the persecution. He was the one who needed to feed the flock of God and to lead them to stand fast for Christ. But how? How could Peter stir the elders to take the lead and do their duty? How could he arouse them to stand in the forefront against such savage persecution? By stressing his right to be heard and the importance of listening to him. Note that Peter stresses three things that should arouse all ministers to heed his exhortation.

1. Peter himself was an elder, a man called by God to be a minister to the flock of God. Therefore, Peter held the very same calling and office as all other elders. He was one with them; he could identify with them. He knew what they felt and experienced, for he faced and went through the same experiences they did. He was the elder sharing with the elders. He was one who had been where they now were and who wanted to help them. Therefore, they needed to listen and hear what he had to say. (See *Elder*, Titus 1:5-9.)

**Thought 1.** Think about this fact for a moment: we hold the very same calling and office that Peter the great apostle did, the calling of being an elder, a minister of God's flock. Just think: these words are a special message to us — all elders and ministers — from Peter himself.

2. Peter was an eye-witness to the sufferings of Christ. He actually saw...
    - the ridicule, mockery and cursing of Christ.
    - the questioning and doubting of Christ.
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- the unbelief and rejection of Christ.
- the denial and rebellion against the claims of Christ.
- the accusation and charges against Christ.
- the sufferings of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- the beatings and abuse Christ bore in His trials.
- the mockery and death of Christ upon the cross.

Peter knew that the sufferings of Christ were real: that Jesus Christ actually did suffer for man. He knew that man could now be saved by the sufferings of the cross if man would only believe and endure to the end. Therefore, the elders — all ministers of the gospel — need to listen and hear the exhortation of Peter.

3. Peter was to be a partaker of Jesus' glory. Remember: Peter had witnessed the transfiguration of Christ. He had seen and experienced a little taste of the glory that is to come. While writing this his heart must have beat a little faster, for he was recalling the promise of the Lord to return. And the Lord gave the promise often, always sharing that His followers would share in the glory of the resurrection and of life eternal with Him (cp. Mt. 5:11-12; 13:43; 19:28-29; 25:23; Lk. 6:35; 13:29; Jn. 5:24-26; 5:28-29; 6:40; 8:51; 11:25-26; 12:26; 14:2-3; 17:24).

This was the reason Peter was willing to serve Christ as a minister: he had witnessed and tasted a little of the glory of heaven. He knew what lay ahead. He knew that Christ was truly the Saviour of the world and that His promise of eternal glory was true. Therefore, Peter was willing to serve and bear anything, no matter how severe the suffering. He knew that the glory of heaven was worth bearing anything, no matter how terrible.

**Thought 1.** These three reasons state clearly why all elders — all ministers of the Lord — must listen and heed Peter's exhortation.

- => Peter was an elder himself, one who could identify with us, one who experienced just what we experience.
- => Peter was an eyewitness of the Lord's sufferings. He actually saw Christ die; therefore, he knows that the claims of Christ are true. Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, the Saviour who died for our salvation.
- => Peter was a partaker of the glory that we are all to share. In the transfiguration of Christ he actually witnessed and tasted a little of the glory that is to be revealed and brought to us when Christ returns. He knew that heaven and the glory of life eternal are real.

## II. *1 Peter 05:02–03 Be Shepherds of God's Flock*

The exhortation to ministers is direct and forceful, but as clear as it can be. "Be shepherds of God's flock." The word "shepherd" (poimante) is an all inclusive word that covers all

the duties of the minister. It means not only to preach and teach the Word of God, but to tend and shepherd the flock. It means to act like a shepherd, to carry out the duties of a shepherd. The duties of the shepherd are several fold (see *Shepherd*, 1 Pet. 2:25):

- => to feed the sheep even if he has to gather them in his arms and carry them to the pasture.
- => to guide the sheep to the pasture and away from the rough places and precipices.
- => to seek and save the sheep who get lost.
- => to protect the sheep. He is even willing to sacrifice his life for the sheep.
- => to restore the sheep who go astray and return.
- => to reward the sheep for obedience and faithfulness.
- => to keep the sheep separate from the goats.

But note this: in all the duties of tending and looking after God's flock, we must never forget what the great Greek scholar W.E. Vine stresses:

*"In the spiritual care of God's children, the feeding of the flock from the Word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place. The tending (which includes this) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals, but they are incidental in comparison with the feeding" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).*

Note another significant fact; the flock is *God's flock*; it is not the flock of the minister. Ministers are only shepherds under God. But they are to be under-shepherds: they are to tend God's flock, to look after and care for the flock. The fact that God is the Chief Shepherd does not mean that the minister can leave the care of the flock up to God as though He was going to automatically care for the flock. God looks after the flock through the under-shepherds whom He chooses. This is the way He shepherds. Therefore, every minister is important; every minister is to feed and tend and shepherd God's flock. And Scripture pulls no punches about the fact: Scripture lays down exactly how the minister is to go about caring for the flock.

1. The elder or minister is to take the oversight of the flock willingly, not by force. This does not mean that a person is not to feel the constraint of God and His love in the ministry. He is. All ministers are to sense the constraint of God. Paul forcefully declared the fact:

**1 Cor 9:16** *For I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*

**2 Cor 5:14** *For Christ's love compels us.*

The person should not have to be forced and coerced to minister. He should willingly shepherd God's flock. The minister must willingly do the will of God. He should never have to be compelled or coerced to minister to God's people.

**Thought 1.** The great tragedy is this: many have been called by God into the ministry, called to shepherd His flock, but they refused. Why?

- => Some felt unworthy and inadequate.
- => Some felt it would cost them too much.
- => Some felt it required too much sacrifice.
- => Some did not want to bear the reproach of the ministry.
- => Some felt the demands and duties and expectations were too much to bear.

On and on the list could go, but Scripture is clear. If we have been called into the ministry by God, we must not reject His call. We must not have to be compelled and coerced to do God's will. We must willingly minister and shepherd God's flock.

**Mat 7:21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

**Mat 12:50** *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*

**Mat 25:22-23** *“The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*

**John 4:34** *“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”*

**John 15:16** *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

**Acts 20:24** *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.*

**1 Th 2:8** *We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.*

**2 Tim 4:7-8** *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

**Rev 22:14** *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

2. The elder or minister must take the oversight of the flock not for personal profit and gain, but of a ready mind. The Greek says that no person is to enter the ministry “greedy for money” (mede aischrokerdos), that is, for base gain or for some soiled and dirty advantage. No person should ever enter the ministry...
  - as a profession.

- as a means of livelihood.
- as a means to serve mankind.
- because people say he has the gifts for it.
- because people say he would make a good minister.
- because family and friends encourage him to enter the ministry.

All of these reasons usually surround a person's entrance into the ministry. But they must never be *the reasons* why a person enters the ministry and cares for God's people. The ministry is a *call from God*, and no person dare enter the ministry without a personal call to the ministry. But note: when the call comes, the person is to have a ready mind. He is to minister to God's people; he is to shepherd God's flock.

**Mat 19:21** *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

**Mark 10:28** *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"*

**Luke 9:23-24** *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

**Luke 14:26-27** *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

**Luke 14: 33** *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

**Luke 18:29-30** *"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."*

**Acts 20:33** *I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.*

**Rom 8:13** *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

**Rom 15:1** *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

**1 Cor 10:24** *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.*

**Gal 5:24** *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

**Phil 2:4** *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

**Phil 3:8** *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

3. The elder or minister is to take the oversight of the flock not as a lord, but by being an example. Note, some manuscripts add the phrase “God’s heritage,” stating that ministers are not to be “lords over God’s heritage.” The flock of God is called God’s heritage (kleron). This is the word that was used of Israel in the Old Testament. It means that the Jews were the people who were set apart and allotted and assigned to God. They were His very special allotment and assignment, the people charged to His care and oversight. This is the picture painted of the elder or minister and the flock of God. God has given the minister a very special heritage or allotment and assignment: the minister has been assigned to feed the heritage of God, the very flock that belongs to God Himself.

Now note how the minister is to lead God’s flock. He is not to lord it over them, but he is to lead by example. The minister...

- is not to be a dictator but an example.
- is not to preach one thing and do something else.

The minister is to lead people by living for Christ. He is to preach and teach Christ, but he is to first of all live a pure and righteous life just like Christ lived. The minister is to live exactly what he preaches. He is to be a pattern and model for Christ, a pattern and model of just what God wants His people to be.

**Mat 5:13** *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*

**Mark 10:42-44** *Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”*

**John 13:15** *“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”*

**1 Tim 4:12** *Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

**Titus 2:7** *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

**James 5:10** *Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

**1 Pet 2:21** *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

### III. 1 Peter 05:04 The Glorious Reward

The reward for elders or ministers is glorious. It is a crown of glory that never fades away. Note two things.

1. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd and He is going to appear, that is, return, to earth. The idea is that nothing will stop His return: He is going to appear and reward His ministers.

Note the title of Christ, the Chief Shepherd (archipoimenos). Alan Stibbs says that it is the “Arch Shepherd” or “Archbishop” who is over all and to whom we shall all give an account (*The First Epistle General of Peter*. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 168).

The work of Jesus as the Shepherd is fourfold.

- a. Jesus Christ is the *Good Shepherd*. He is called *good* because He risks and sacrifices His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11, 15; cp. Psa. 22).
  - b. Jesus Christ is the *Great Shepherd*. He is called *great* because He arose from the dead and He perfects the sheep (Heb. 13:20-21).
  - c. Jesus Christ is the *Shepherd and Overseer* of our souls. He is called the *shepherd and overseer* because He welcomes those who wandered off and went astray (1 Pet. 2:25).
  - d. Jesus Christ is the *Chief Shepherd*. He is called *chief* because He is to appear and return to earth with great glory and reward the faithful (1 Pet. 5:4).
2. The reward for elders is glorious: it is to be a crown of glory. What does this mean? It means that the faithful minister shall share in the glory of heaven and be crowned with a very special portion of glory. By crown is meant rule and reign, the assignment of heavenly service for Christ. (See note, 1 Pet. 1:4 for a list of all rewards.)

**Mat 10:42** “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

**Mat 25:23** “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”

**John 14:2** “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”

**Eph 6:8** Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

**1 Pet 5:4** And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

**Rev 3:11** I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ■