

1 Peter 5:1-5 – A Word to the Elders

A. Introduction

- **1:1** – Peter is writing to several small churches scattered through Turkey.
- **4:12** – Things are difficult and about to get worse as persecution bites.
- **5:1** - He addresses the elders since he knows that in the coming crisis, they will face severe pressure and their leadership of the church is vital for its survival.

B. He defines their ministry (1-2)

Three words are used to refer to the same ministry (Acts 20:17,28)

❖ **Elders – “Presbuteros”**

- Eldership was the *pattern* of Old Testament leadership (Exodus 18:21-22; Numbers 11:16-25). Every Synagogue had its elders.
- Eldership is the *practice* of the New Testament. Elders were to be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7). There is always:
 - ⇒ **Plurality** - each church had a team of elders
 - ⇒ **Diversity** - all are to lead - some are called to preach (1 Timothy 5:17).
 - ⇒ **Equality** – there may be a team leader, but there is no rank among elders.

❖ **“Shepherd the flock” - Shepherd – Pastor – “Poimen”**

- The elder is to care like a Shepherd and to feed the flock (John 21:15-17).
- They are to follow the example of Christ who laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:11-18,26-27; Psalm 23; Acts 20:28; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:5).

❖ **Watching over – “Episkopos” - Overseer - Bishop**

- Elders are to watch over the church protecting the flock from false teaching and the alien idols of this world.
- This is vital because the devil is active (5:8-9).

C. He describes their character (2-3,5)

Emphasis is on character and heart attitude more than gifts or abilities.

❖ **A willing heart - gladly not grudgingly (2)**

- Duty is not a dirty work – sometimes we do things because they are right – irrespective of how we feel. However on its own it is not enough.
- Elders must be motivated by love to Christ and his flock (John 21:15-19).
- Love will turn ministry into joy.

❖ **A servant heart – giving not grasping (2)**

- It is right to pay some of the elders who are set aside to minister the Word (1 Timothy 5:17-18). But the desire for gain must never motivate elders.
- The “*prosperity gospel*” is wrong – but so is the desire for acclaim or honour.
- Elders are called to be servant-hearted – laying down their lives for the flock.

❖ **A humble heart – example not ego (3)**

- “*Not bossily telling others what to do but tenderly showing them the way*”
- Leaders should exercise the authority of the Scripture and the flock should joyfully submit to their godly leadership (4; Hebrew 13:17-18).
- But they must never be dictatorial (Mark 10:41-45). There must be mutual submission (4) and we must never give our conscience to another.
- They must be clothed with humility and lead by example (5; Philippians 2:1-11).

D. He directs their ambitions (4)

- Elders are only under-shepherds and they must give an account to Christ – the chief Shepherds (4; 2:25; Hebrews 13:20).
- They are motivated by the legitimate desire to gain the crown of glory.
- Suffering now will lead to glory in the future (1)

E. Application

- We should look beyond earthly leaders to Christ – who died to rescue lost sheep (Mark 10:45; John 10:11,15,17).
- Christians should pray for their leaders, accepting that they are fallible men (Hebrew 13:7-8). Pray that their task gives them joy.
- All of us should strive to gain unfading crowns (1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:10; James 1:12). We cast them at the feet of Jesus (Revelation 2:10; 4:4,10).