

Hard Times Call for Godly Leaders

I Peter 5:1-4

Introduction

It's true, there is no "I" in team. You will struggle, however, to find a successful team without someone to lead it. Sport teams have captains. The military is a team of sorts that will not function properly without a hierarchical arrangement. My wife, Ebony, works in corporate America and I hear the term, "team lead" or "manager" used from time-to-time. Leadership is important for the success of the team.

On a higher and holier level, Godly leadership is important in the life of any Christian community. In the verses that follow, Peter describes the role and responsibilities of elders who God uses to shepherd His flock. Remember the historical context. Peter's epistle is addressed to those who will face harassment for their hope in Christ and subsequent change in character, conduct, and company. Its important they have godly leaders to look to as an example of Christian conduct. Those who faithfully serve God's flock receive a crown that does not fade.

There is, however, another motivation toward faithfulness to God among the Christian community; judgment is coming. Chapter 5 cannot be divorced from Peter's closing warning in 4:17. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God.¹ If Judgement begins in the household of God it makes good sense to ensure the house is in order from the top down.

The Text

5 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.²

Exposition

Walk with Christ (I Peter 5:1)

- A. Peter begins to direct final instructions to elders as a fellow elder.
 - a. **πρεσβύτερος^b, (presbuteros)**: a person of responsibility and authority in matters of socio-religious concerns, both in Jewish and Christian societies³

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 4:17.

² Ibid, 1 Pe 5:1-4.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 541.

- b. **συμπρεσβύτερος, (sympresbuteros)** : one who is an elder along with others—“fellow elder.”⁴
- c. These are men who were placed over congregations with authority and responsibility
- i. They exercise authority

¹²We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.⁵
 - ii. They have responsibility

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. ⁶

¹⁷Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”⁷
- B. Peter is a witness of the sufferings of Christ
- a. One of the themes of the epistle is suffering is the pathway to glory.
 - b. Some scholars debate Peter is claiming to be present when Jesus is crucified. I don’t believe that’s what’s happening here...he is not insisting he has witnessed every moment Jesus suffered.
 - i. He witnessed Jesus’ ministry
 - ii. He witnessed mounting opposition
 - iii. He witnessed Jesus’ arrest
 - iv. He just may have made his way to the cross after he denied Jesus, but he definitely would have received the account from John who was present.
- C. Peter is a fellow participant in the future glory to be revealed.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 542.

⁵ Ibid, 1 Th 5:12–13.

⁶ Ibid, 1 Ti 3:1–7.

⁷ Ibid, 1 Ti 5:17–18.

- a. This is a reference to the future reward believers receive when Jesus returns
- i. I Peter 1: 7, 11, 21
⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸
- Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.⁹***
- ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. ¹⁰**
- ii. I Peter 4:13-14
¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.¹¹

Work within the Congregation (I Peter 5:2-3)

- A. Peter explains the task of the elder in the Christian community
 - a. They function as shepherds of the flock of God.
 - i. Bad shepherds: Ezekiel 34
 1. Treat the flock harshly and brutally
 2. Care only for themselves
 - ii. Good shepherds: Acts 20:17 ff.
 - iii. Luther rightly argues that we shepherd God's flock by preaching the gospel.¹²
 - b. The NT offices of elder and overseer are the same
- B. There is a right and wrong way to carry out the task
 - a. Wrong: to serve under *compulsion*
 - i. Instead they serve whole-heartedly
 - b. Wrong: to serve exclusively for *compensation*
 - i. Instead they serve willingly
 - c. Wrong: to serve for *coercion*

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 1:7.

⁹ Ibid, 1 Pe 1:10–11.

¹⁰ Ibid, 1 Pe 1:21.

¹¹ Ibid, 1 Pe 4:13–14.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 233. Taken from Luther, *Commentary on Peter & Jude*, 205.¹²

- i. Instead they serve as an example.

Wait for a Crown (I Peter 5:4)

- A. Peter calls on these elders to suffer with a future reward in view
 - a. Chief Shepherd - **ἀρχιποίμην, (archipoimen)**: the head shepherd who directs the activities of other shepherds¹³
 - i. Reminds us we are servants and our positions are responsibilities to execute, not privileges to enjoy.
 - ii. We do the will of the Lord and not the will of govt., people, etc.
 - b. Unfading Crown
 - i. This crown is contrasted with the crowns they would receive in the Greco-Roman world in athletic games. They start out beautiful, but over time their beauty fades away.
 - ii. The crown Jesus gives will be beautiful with continuity.

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing. ¹⁴

¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹¹⁵

¹³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 517.

¹⁴ Ibid, 2 Ti 4:6–8.

¹⁵ Ibid, Re 2:10–11.