

1Pet 5.1-4—The Humble Rule of Christ's Elders

Peter's example, v.1

- I. Peter identifies himself in several ways, Lk 22-23; Mt 17; Lk 24; Mt 4.18-20; Mt 16.16. But for all he could lay claim to, he settles on *fellow elder*, exemplifying the humility to which he calls them.
 - A. Peter was humbled by his privileges, not exalted by them.
 - B. The church's elders are fellow workmen with the apostles themselves.
- II. It's no wonder then, that the elders of Christ's church are called to be humble and it's no wonder then that the members of Christ's church are called to humbly submit to them.

Peter's charge, vv.2-3

- I. The church's elders are to shepherd the flock among them, by exercising oversight.
 - A. The image of shepherding runs through all of Scripture because it beautifully captures God's good care for His people, Ezk 34.15, 30-31; Ps 23; Jn 10.
 - B. And it's because God's always been His people's shepherd and Christ cares for His people with the heart of a shepherd, that those whom He raises up as leaders in His church are to lead with the heart of a shepherd. What does this look like?
 1. It means to exercise oversight, v.2; Acts 20.28; Heb 13.17. The Lord's elders are to keep watch for Christ's sake over the flock entrusted to them, Acts 20.28; Heb 13.17.
 2. It means to feed the flock, 2Tim 4.2. The Lord's elders are to make sure the Word is preached and the Sacraments are administered. They're to make sure the church has a regular supply of the means of grace for a healthy and holy life.
 3. It means to lead the flock, 1Tim 4.13-16. The Lord's elders are to faithfully teach God's people the way of God and lead them in it. They're to lead them in a good and right way, not overdriving them, but at a pace that keeps everyone together.
 4. It means to protect the flock, Acts 20.28; Heb 13.17; 2Tim 2.2. The Lord's elders are to keep a close eye on the church to make sure none is in distress or suffering, or in danger of being led astray. This requires gaining firsthand knowledge of the flock by walking among them as shepherds.

5. It means to serve the flock, 1Cor 9.19, 22-23; 2Tim 2.10. The Lord's elders are to spend and be spent for the good of the sheep. To carry out their ministry selflessly, as men seeking to build up the people of God, Eph 4.11-16.
- C. The role model for the church's elders is Christ Himself.
 1. It's His example they're to follow. It's His shepherding that sets the pace and shows the way that elders are to shepherd the flock entrusted to them, Jn 13.15.
 2. And from Him, they learn, in essence, that the life of an elder in Christ's church is to be characterized by a genuine love and concern for the sheep, both patterned after Him.
- II. How they're to carry out their charge—not so much in practice, as in principle.
 - A. Not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have them.
 - B. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly, 2Tim 2.10.
 - C. Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock, Heb 13.7.

Peter's encouragement, v.4

- I. When the chief Shepherd appears, they'll receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - A. There's the clear inference of accountability, Heb 13.17. This accountability encourages both diligence and humility.
 - B. There's also the clear promise of reward, 1Cor 15.58. The Lord's not a hard taskmaster. Whatever He calls them to give up, He more than makes up, 2Cor 4.17-18.

Applications

- I. For the church.
 - A. Pray for your elders. They can't serve well without God's grace.
 - B. Encourage your elders. Tell them what a blessing they are to you.
 - C. Support your elders. Speak well of them in their absence.
- II. For the elders.
 - A. Examine your heart before God. What are your motives?
 - B. Study Christ's shepherding and strive before God to improve in your calling. Where can you grow to be more like Christ?
 - C. Thank God for His calling to serve His church in this way.
 - D. Pray that Christ's own perfect shepherding would graciously cover your feeble efforts, for He's your shepherd too.