

## **“The Winning Elder”**

2018: *The Year of the Winner*

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV)

*To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup>Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup>not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

**Subject Question:** What three privileged duties does St. Peter charge to those who have been called to be Elders in Christ precious church?

**Compliment answer:** Watch Over Others (Vs.1-2a), Watch Over Yourself (Vs.2b-3), and Watch Over and Over and Over (Vs.4).

**Big Idea:** The three privileged duties that St. Peter charges to those who have been called as Elders in Christ’s precious church are to: Watch Over Others (Vs.1-2a), Watch Over Yourself (Vs.2b-3), and Watch Over and Over and Over (Vs.4).

**Homiletical Idea:** **“Winners in Leadership”**

**Purpose:** I want the congregation in general and Elders in particular to understand and respond to take to heart Christ’s special calling to the leaders in His church.

**Ground Work:** **Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary**

5:1-4 The apostle Peter does not command, but exhorts. He does not claim power to rule over all pastors and churches. It was the peculiar honor of Peter and a few more, to be witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true Christians to partake of the glory that shall be revealed. These poor, dispersed, suffering Christians, were the flock of God, redeemed to God by the

great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion, according to the will of God. They are also dignified with the title of God's heritage or clergy; his peculiar lot, chosen for his own people, to enjoy his special favor, and to do him special service. Christ is the chief Shepherd of the whole flock and heritage of God. And all faithful ministers will receive a crown of unfading glory, infinitely better and more honorable than all the authority, wealth, and pleasure of the world.

### **Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**

2. *feed the flock of God*] The word for “feed,” here as elsewhere, implies the whole work of the shepherd—guiding, directing, protecting, as well as supplying food (comp. [Luke 17:7](#); [John 21:16](#); [Acts 20:28](#); [1 Corinthians 9:7](#)). The shepherd’s work had been from a very early period a parable of that of rulers and of teachers. Kings were to Homer the “shepherds of the people” ([ποίητες λαῶν](#)). David was taken from the sheepfold to feed Israel as the flock of Jehovah ([Psalm 78:70-71](#)). The sin of the kings and rulers of Judah had been that they did not feed the flock, but scattered and destroyed it ([Jeremiah 23:1-4](#); [Ezekiel 34:2-31](#)). In St Peter’s use of the word we note a reproduction of the words that had fallen on his ears with a three-fold, yet varied, iteration, “Feed my sheep” ([John 21:16](#)). The comprehensiveness of the word must not be lost sight of. It includes more than preaching or teaching, and takes in the varied duties of what we rightly call the pastoral office. In the words “the flock of God” men are tacitly reminded who is the Chief Shepherd whom they serve, and to whom they will have to render an account (comp. [Acts 20:28](#)). It may be noted as a characteristic difference that in the Old Testament the shepherds of the people are always the civil rulers of the nation (e.g. [Psalm 78:71](#); [Ezekiel 34:2](#)), while in the New that thought falls into the background, and the shepherd of the flock is its spiritual guide and teacher.

*taking the oversight thereof*] The first three words are the English equivalent of the Greek participle of the verb formed from *Episcopos*, the “bishop,” or “overseer” of the Church. In its being thus used to describe the office of the elders of the Church we have a close parallel to St Paul’s addressing the “elders” of the Church as being also “overseers” ([Acts 20:28](#)). The two terms were in fact interchangeable, and what is now the higher office of the Bishop in relation to the Presbyters was discharged by the Apostle or his personal representative.

*not by constraint, but willingly]* The words that follow indicate the three great conditions of true pastoral work. (1) It must not be entered on reluctantly and as under pressure. In one sense indeed the truest and best work may be done by one who feels, as St Paul felt, that a “necessity is laid” upon him (1 Corinthians 9:16), but there the necessity was that of a motive essentially spiritual. What St Peter deprecates is the drawing back from the labour and responsibility of the care of souls. The *Nolo episcopari*, which has been so often the formula of the pride or the sloth that apes humility, would have been in his eyes the sign of cowardice and weakness. Here, as in other things, the true temper is that of cheerful and willing service. The history of the Church presents, it is true, not a few instances, among which Chrysostom and Ambrose are preeminent, of the pastoral and episcopal office being forced upon a reluctant acceptance, but in such cases the reluctance left no trace in the afterlife. The work once entered on was done “willingly,” not as a forced and constrained service. It may be noted that the memorable treatise of Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, is in its form an *apologia* for his unwillingness to enter on the priestly office on the ground of its infinite dangers and responsibilities. Some of the better MSS. add the words “according to God,” to “willingly,” the phrase having the same meaning (“according to the will of God,”) as in chap. 1 Peter 4:6, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10.

*not for filthy lucre]* The adverb is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. The corresponding adjective meets us in 1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:8, Titus 1:7. The words are interesting as shewing that even in the troubled times in which St Peter wrote there was enough wealth in the Church to make the position of a Bishop-presbyter a lucrative one. There was the double stipend for those who were both pastors and preachers (1 Timothy 5:17). There was, for baser natures, the temptation of using spiritual influence for secular ends, “devouring widows’ houses,” as the Pharisees did in Judea (Matthew 23:14), “leading captive silly women,” as did the false teachers at Ephesus (2 Timothy 3:6) and Crete (Titus 1:11). It may be noted that the term which both the Apostles use of the man who enters on the work of the ministry of souls from such a motive, is one which Greek writers commonly use of one who seeks gain in base and sordid ways. In their eyes the calling of a presbyter might be made, so followed, as disreputable an occupation as that of the usurer, or the pander, or the slave-dealer. In contrast with this temper, eagerly catching at

emoluments, the Apostle points to the cheerful readiness that seeks eagerly for work.

### **Benson Commentary**

**1 Peter 5:3-4.** *Neither as being lords, or lording it, over God's heritage* — Behaving in a haughty, domineering manner, as though you had dominion over their consciences. From this prohibition it would seem that, in the apostle's days, the bishops or elders were beginning to assume that dominion over their flocks, which in after times they carried to the greatest height of tyranny. Or St. Peter, by inspiration, foreseeing what would happen, condemned in this prohibition the tyranny which in after times the clergy exercised. *But being ensamples to the flock* — Setting them an example worthy of their imitation; and therefore, being of a meek and lowly, kind and condescending mind, and be having toward them with such gentle, tender solicitude for their salvation, and such an entire freedom from the very appearance either of avarice or ambition, that you may gain their confidence, and win their affections. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear* — To judge the world; ye — Who have discharged your duty to your flocks faithfully; *shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away* — A crown which shall bloom in immortal beauty and vigor, when all the transitory glories of this world are withered, like a fading flower. In the original expression, **αμαραντινον**, *amaranthine*, there is an allusion to the crowns of green leaves and herbs bestowed by the ancients as the rewards of military prowess, or of victory in the games. These, together with the honors of which they were the symbols, soon *faded away*; but the crown of glory, the reward to be given to faithful shepherds, will never fade, being *a crown of righteousness*, 2 Timothy 4:8, and *a crown of life*, James 1:12. The word rendered *heritage* in the singular number, properly signifies *a lot*. But because the land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites by lot, the word came to signify, *a heritage*. Wherefore, believers being God's people, or portion, the different churches or congregations are called here *God's heritages*. In process of time, the name **κληρος**, *clergy*, was appropriated to the ministers of the gospel, because, being considered as the successors of the Levitical priests, they were regarded as God's lot or portion.

**Introduction:** The Apostle Peter knew what it was to be called of Christ—knew what it was to be walk with Christ—knew what it was to be called into leadership by Christ—and knew what it was to do well for and yet... be incredibly disappointing on behalf of Christ. He also, knew what it was, and this is important, to be forgiven by Christ—and to hear Christ's compelling

words; Feed my Sheep—watch over my lambs, care for those whom I have called to be mine. In other words, life itself in the presence of the Man from Galilee, had developed within Peter a very special servant– leader’s heart. That heart really, is the example that leaders in every age and in every generation of Christian leaders are called to develop in their God-ordained roles of minister or Elder or deacon or trustee. Notice the way Peter begins our section of scripture today: *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed...* He doesn’t boastfully say, listen up and learn, I’ve got all the answers! He doesn’t go on to give a list of qualifications, commands, expectations, rules of behavior—No he simply says, let me share my heart with you. Let me share three qualities, three outlooks concerning Christ’s church from a leaders point of view. Let me share with you the basics... First He says, as a Leader you have the special calling to...

(Good Leaders strive to stay in Step with Christ)

- A. Watch Over Others (Vs.1-2a). *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: **Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them***
- B. What was the Big Fisher pointing out? First, people in leadership are not called to rule over but to take the lead.
  1. Be shepherds—Gods people deserve special care... they need guidance, teaching, to be fed both physically and spiritually. They need a shoulder to cry on, words of encouragement, ears that will listen, eyes of compassion, and a sense that somebody actually is interested and cares about what is going on in their lives. They need to be lovingly corrected when their behavior is unbecoming They need to feel acceptance, love, appreciation, and forgiveness. They need to know that they are not alone. A shepherd is one who does, yes, but a true shepherd is who is. In other words a shepherd is just as defined by his or her character as his or her ability to solve problems or provide solutions.
  2. Be shepherds of God’s flock –God’s people deserve special care for no other reason than the fact that they belong to God. God loves them and believes in them. He has chosen them; He knows them and watches over them. He is also aware when they wander off or find themselves in a pit of sin. And as frustrating as they can be—they are

and forever will be His. The reason I bring this up, is because when dealing with church people, we must always keep in mind the perspective that it's not our flock, or folks are just folks, we are watching over His folks and His flock.

3. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care---and here is the rub. God has placed you in a position of being out front; being someone whom others can look up to; being if nothing more or less an image of Christ Himself.
- C. Please take this to heart: God has seen something concerning His people that only something in you can convey to them, something of Him.
- D. Elders are shepherds, servant- leaders. We are called to be with His people, and for His people. We are challenged to accept the call to lead, protect, guide and minister to a people God has deemed us, you and me as worthy in His eyes, to shepherd. With a gentle heart, Watch Over Others... but as well...

(Good Leaders strive to stay in Step with Christ)

- A. Watch Over Yourself (Vs.2b-3). ---*not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup>not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*
- B. Or as Benson states: — *Setting them an example worthy of their imitation.* Let me assure you today. The church is not lacking in good elders, bright people, intelligent, creative, people with vision, energy, love for God and His people. But there is a difference between being an efficient Elder and being an effective Elder. Efficient Elders understand how, effective Elders understand why.
- C. Great Elders understand both the how and the why. As an Elder, Deacon or Trustee, Peter's words here should never be too far from your mind and heart **but being examples to the flock.** You should always be asking yourself: Am I living, am I acting, am I being a person who reminds people of Jesus?
- D. I think Peter understood the power of the challenge in these words. Watch over yourself, before you ever attempt to watch over others. Walk what you talk. And when you fail, which you will do, keep in mind Peter's example of stumbling and bumbling and failing only to find

forgiveness and acceptance and encouragement to keep striving to be, and keep serving the Lord you love and who loves you and who believes in you and always will! Watch Over Others... Watch Over Yourself... and finally...

(Good Leaders strive to stay in Step with Christ)

- A. Watch Over and Over and Over (Vs.4). *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*
- B. Our work among God's people has an eternal reward. I think we can assume that. And yet at the same time, there is something worthy noting in this life. You as a Elder have been ordained, the root of that word actually mean you have been set apart. God is His love for you and His trust in you has allowed you to set apart for not just a period of three or six years... but for a lifetime.
- C. It's true, once an Elder, always an Elder. There is no such thing as, "I used to be an Elder"—no! The correct statement is "I once served on the Session, or Board, Or Deacon, as part of my calling to be an Elder."
- D. In other words, as a called Elder you never should stop watching over others, or watching over yourself—you are a lifetime example to God's people. Keep watching---keep serving. It's the highest of calling and the greatest of privileges.