

1 PETER 5:1-4 | INSTRUCTIONS TO ELDERS

- Verse 1 –
 - Peter has an exhortation to **the elders**, of which he was one. Peter claims for himself alone that he is **a witness of the sufferings of Christ** as well as **a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed**. Let's consider this verse from the end to the beginning.
 - What does it mean to be **a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed**?
 - We must take the *most literal interpretation* as the “one to beat.” It must be our guide.
 - While most interpreters would probably claim that this is Peter's statement of assurance of salvation (which no doubt he had), I take it to be a simple statement of fact: *Peter had seen the glory that shall be revealed*.
 - This took place at the Mount of Transfiguration. Recall that Jesus had said that some would **see the Son of man coming in his kingdom** (Mt. 16:28) before they died, then six days later Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in His glory.
 - Just prior to this statement Peter says he was **a witness of the sufferings of Christ**.
 - Since we would make this a reference to Peter's eyewitness experience of Christ's suffering, why would we not also take the same grammar to make **partaker of the glory** to be testimony of his *previous* eyewitness account?
 - Note also that Peter speaks of the **sufferings of Christ** rather than the *death of Christ*. As far as we know, Peter was not present at the death of Christ but certainly saw the sufferings of Christ, both before and after His arrest.
 - Finally, Paul speaks of being **an elder** giving exhortation to **the elders**. Who are these elders?
 - The Greek word is πρεσβύτερος [presbuteros]. In the strictest sense, it is the one of more advanced age, and this is almost certainly the usage here, since it is followed by a word to the **younger** (v. 5).
 - In a broader Jewish sense, the word had come to be used of the Sanhedrin and of others in places of religious authority in the Jewish community.
 - In a broader Gentile sense, the word was also used to refer to civic leaders, even “in the most diverse localities.”¹
- Verse 2 –
 - The phrase **Feed the flock** is literally *shepherd the sheep*.
 - This is a *general* message to older men, in my estimation, not specifically to leadership.

¹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 535.

- It is also general as to the “congregation,” exhorting the older men to feed *whatever* flock happened to be in their midst.
 - These men are to be **taking the oversight** of the flock.
 - As in the instruction to Bishops in 1 Timothy 3, the **oversight** (ἐπισκοπέω [episkopeo]) is something to be *desired* (1 Tim. 3:1) and *taken* (using a present active participle, not passive).
 - The taking of this oversight and feeding responsibility by older men should be done **willingly** and **not for filthy lucre** and with **a ready mind**.
 - While this instruction is to the elders of the Jewish Messianic congregations, there is scarcely a society or congregation anywhere that would not benefit from the elders stepping up to leadership with a ready mind.
- Verse 3 –
 - Continuing on the previous thought, Peter adds that the elder men should not serve as **being lords** but rather **being ensamples**.
 - The phrase **being lords** is from the Greek κατακυριεύω [katakurieō], which is “lordship to the farthest extent possible.”
 - This *over-extension* of rule would be **over God’s heritage** which is Israel (Dt. 4:20).
 - The word **heritage** is of the same root as the word *inheritance*. The men are to be **ensamples (examples) to the flock**.
 - It is my belief that all *sheep* terminology is related to Israel.
- Verse 4 –
 - The appearance of **the chief Shepherd** is the Second Coming, which is the only appearance in view in prophetic (as opposed to mystery) literature.
 - Peter promises a **crown of glory** to those older men who live up to his exhortation. This is a crown **that fadeth not away**, though it is a στεφανος [stephanos] (a victor’s crown) rather than a *diadema* (a ruler’s crown).
 - A side note: all of the “crowns of reward” theology taught in churches today involves the eisegesis of the church into the passages at hand. Whatever the rewards of the faithful Christian, the *crowns* are taken from Jewish passages.