

Pastors for Suffering

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[0 : 00] All right, if you would open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5, we are almost done with 1 Peter. And here we are, the last chapter, great, great, great chapter.

We're just going to take a look at verses 1 through 5 this morning. Beginning in verse 1, here is the word of the Lord. 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.

Now I'm just going to pause and say, it's interesting to me, Peter is appealing to them as fellow elders. They're on the same playing field. We'll talk about what an elder is here in a little bit. But then he goes a little further, talking about being a witness to the sufferings of Christ and a partaker in the glory.

He's basically saying, I'm also an apostle, so you need to listen to me, right? Then he says the command, shepherd the flock of God that is among you. How? Exercising oversight.

With what attitude? Not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

[1 : 19] And why? And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. So what should be your response? Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Let's pray together.

Father, we praise you because of this perfect treasure that we have of your thoughts. And we pray, Father, that you would help us to understand what your thoughts are, that we would see in these life-giving words, things that we need, and that you would use it for our good.

And we pray that you would have all of the glory in Christ's name. Amen. I don't know if you've had the experience of working on some kind of project to get so far into that project that you realized you didn't really know what you were doing with that project.

And you thought, this is not good. I don't know. Maybe, like me, it's been putting a roof on or building a cabinet. Maybe it's been putting a lift kit in a Jeep.

[2 : 32] Maybe it's making stained glass, or maybe it's making a five-course meal, or painting an oil painting. Maybe some project. But at some point, you feel like you've come to the end.

You're not really sure what to do. And so you think to yourself, maybe you just sell it, walk away, or immolate it with fire. And so what you really need is you need someone. You need someone who has been down that road at least a little bit to maybe help you.

As we were building our house, or not building, but remodeling the house in Port Lavaca, there are many, many times I ran into something I had no idea what to do with, and I just needed someone who had at least experienced it to help me know maybe what not to do or what to do, just to help me get down the road just a little bit.

It's really interesting to me that in 1 Peter, he has been on this path to help us know what the truth of the gospel is as we're approaching suffering, particularly that which deals with people sinning against us.

And now all of a sudden, after he's given these final commands back in chapter 4, you remember, it's like he says, finally, do these things. Now all of a sudden, he's turned his attention to these people called elders.

[3 : 53] And he's talking to these people called elders, and we just got to ask the question, Peter, are you writing a new letter here? What's going on? It just seems to be one of these moments where it's like, what's going on here?

So let me do two things before we dive into what this is talking about. Number one, let me give you a few words that you need to think about. The first word is the word elder.

Everybody say elder. All right. The second word is the word shepherd. Everybody say shepherd. And the third word is overseer. Everybody say overseer. Those three English words, and sometimes for shepherd, you'll see the word pastor.

Those three English words are throughout the New Testament, and those three English words describe one office, official office within the church.

Now some of you may not be aware of this, but the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is led by two offices, that of pastor and that of deacons. And we've talked about deacons a couple weeks ago, as God has provided for this church, three new deacons that are going to serve the church.

[5 : 05] We're excited about that. But the other office is that of pastor, or elder, or overseer. And all three words mean the one and same office.

Now here's how those words work in my mind. The term elder is actually like the title, because it signifies maturity. The word pastor signifies the task that this guy does, right?

And so that's why it's shepherd, pastor, shepherd. And the third word is the word overseer, and this is really about how the task is done. And what's interesting is that this overseer, if you're using an old King James or a translation like that, you're not going to see the word overseer, but you're going to see the word bishop.

Bishop. And the word bishop comes from the Greek word, now listen to this, okay? Episkopos. Oh, whoa, whoa, that sounds like a denomination. Well, there is a denomination called the Episcopalians, right?

They pull their word from that. They pull their name from that. Well, it's interesting that the word elders, it comes from a Greek word that sounds like this, if you recognize this, presbytos.

[6 : 17] Yeah, it sounds like the Presbyterians, right? Well, there's not a word that says Baptist, so I'm sorry to say. But the point is this, is that as Peter begins to talk to the elders of the church, he's talking to people like me.

He's talking to the pastor. Here's God's flock. Here's God's sheep. And they're going to encounter trials and difficulties and sufferings. Therefore, elders shepherd the sheep.

Because if there's one thing that God's people need throughout times of suffering is to be shepherded by the under shepherds that God provides.

And so I want us to see then here how through Peter's thoughts on elders, we might live out the things that he says here that will help the church as the church encounters whatever comes at it in the future.

And so he gives us basically four thoughts about elders here that I want to look at. The first has to do with the person of the elder. Then we're going to look at the task of the elder. Then we'll look at the attitude of the elder.

[7 : 28] And finally, we'll look at the reward of the elder or elders, plural. The person of the elder. Well, the first thing I need to tell you is that the word elder signifies that this is a man.

It's a masculine term. Greek is an inflected language like Spanish. So you can have feminine, masculine nouns and words and pronouns. This word is masculine. And the idea is that it is a man that must fill the office of elder.

This is confirmed by other places in the scripture where the qualifications for elders are given, where one of those qualifications is being the husband of one wife. That's pretty plain and simple. Our culture, our culture, because we're bowing to all kinds of other things, we like to complicate this. Because some people will say, well, you know, I mean, a woman can be just as good as a man. And I say to you, amen, and probably even more so. But you have to understand that there's a difference between what a woman can do and what a woman is authorized to do.

[8 : 32] Matter of fact, you say to yourself, and this is my belief, you can take this and you can just forget what I'm about to say. But God's pattern to me in scripture is that he chooses the weak to shame the wise, the strong.

And so you ask, well, why did God choose men to lead the church instead of women? Because women are very capable, and it might not appear that it's God doing the work if a woman did it. But if a man does it, it absolutely has to be the work of God doing it. And so I just need you to understand that whatever we do, God's word is clear, and we don't need to bow down and go to where the culture goes to.

As a matter of fact, he tells us in 1 Timothy 2, he says, I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. This is not to say that women are somehow degraded.

And women are wonderful creations of God made in the image of God with so many opportunities and abilities and things that God has given you. You just have to understand that God has an order to things, and this is the way he's chosen to order it.

[9 : 44] Do I understand all the ins and outs of that? No, but I believe it. And so an elder must be a man. The second thing an elder must be is that he must be one of many.

There must be a plurality of elders. This is all through the New Testament. It's in almost every place that you see it. In our text in front of us, he says, I exhort the elders, plural, among you, plural, you all, y'all, right?

So the elders among y'all. Now that hints at the idea that each of these churches that are represented by the different areas that Peter's writing to, each had several elders that just hints at it. But listen to Acts chapter 20, verse 17, where Paul, it is said that now from Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus, one church, and called the elders, plural, of the church to come to him.

There's a plurality of elders in one church. We get the same thing in Titus chapter 1, verse 5, where Paul writes to Titus and says, This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained in order and appoint.

[10 : 56] Now, the ESV says elders in every town. But that word every is not in the Greek. The word there is according to.

Elders, plurality of elders, according to every town. Which means that there's going to be a plurality in every church. Most Baptist churches that you've grown up in, that I've grown up in, there's been one pastor.

There's been the senior pastor, the teaching pastor, the one pastor. That's the way most of us grew up. I would imagine most of you didn't grow up with a plurality of elders.

But I just want you to understand, God has expected and put in the example of the church, a plurality of elders, and from an elder, from a pastor who's been doing this for 30 years, I'm going to tell you something.

It is absolutely good and right and necessary. And why is that? Because bearing the weight of the souls that you're responsible for should not be on one man.

[11 : 59] It is vital that the elders oversee and shepherd the souls that God has given to them. And so there has to be a plurality.

One of the reasons that many of our churches don't do that plurality, or at least have that tradition, is because there have been no qualified men that can be brought into the eldership.

So the application from this step is just to call you and say, be praying, be praying for this congregation, that even within this congregation, God would raise up men who could serve as lay elders, who can help shepherd the souls.

Well, let's then talk about that. That's the task of the elder, right? The task of the elder is right there in that command in verse 2, to shepherd, to shepherd the flock of God. This is also where we get the word pastor.

So pastor, shepherd. So if you say to me, Pastor Brady, which is the proper way to call me, Randy, you're calling me Shepherd Brady. That's the task, right?

[13 : 07] So what does a shepherd do? Well, think back to Psalm 23 for just a second. You don't have to read it. Just think about what it says. What does that shepherd do, right?

He leads the sheep. He cares for the sheep. He keeps the sheep from straying from the path. He gives the sheep good places to eat and good places to rest.

Protects the sheep. He's with the sheep even all the way through to death. Peter was reminded of his duty as a shepherd after he had denied Jesus.

After the resurrection, Jesus comes to him and says, Do you love me? Three times he says that. And each time he tells Peter something like, Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs.

Feed my lambs. This is what pastors, This is what elders do. They shepherd the flock of God. To shepherd the flock of God means to feed, to care, and to lead.

[14 : 13] To feed, to care, and to lead. Now, he doesn't just say shepherd, but he says to shepherd them, exercising oversight.

Exercising oversight. This exercising oversight is this idea of, this is how the shepherding task is done. It is to exercise oversight. To exercise oversight is to watch over someone.

It is to exercise leadership. Right? The elders, the pastors, they need to lead. They don't need to just wait, but they need to lead.

But much like all leadership, there's a couple of truths about leadership. One, if you are wondering if you're a leader, look behind you to see if anybody's following you. Right? But two, you can never run too far out in front.

You've got to stay close so they can see you and stay right there next to you. But it also means exercising guardianship. You know, God's people have been given to pastors as a steward.

[15:19] He is to guard them. He is to protect them. He is to make sure that the wolves don't come in. He is to make sure that they don't get led astray by all kinds of things. Which is why pastors need to be sure that they understand what the word says so that they can protect the people from false ideas that like to creep in.

But they're also to exercise providership. I had to say it that way so it would match. I know that's not correct, but just bear with me. You have to exercise providership, and that is, it's your responsibility to provide for the sheep.

You have to feed them. You have to go to the word of God, understand what it says, and give them that word. We're in a day and age where, because of AI, because of the internet, there are so many pastors who don't even write their own sermons.

There are ministries out there that will write a sermon for you so that you can get it and then just read it off and preach it to someone else. Plagiarism among pastors is massive.

If you can't go to the word and study it for yourself and come up with what God's word says to be able to tell God's people what it says, then maybe you should find something else to do.

[16:30] The point is, is that I don't try to come up with my own thoughts here. I don't try to come up with my own way of doing it. I'm taking the text, I'm interpreting the text and telling you what it says. That's all I'm doing.

Because it's not me that has the words of life, but it is God. That whole idea then of exercising oversight, shepherding God's people, is really summed up well in Hebrews chapter 13, where it says this, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning. Now you hear that? The expectation is some people are going to be difficult to pastor. But he goes on to say, for that would be of no advantage to you.

I'm going to tell you something. If you're difficult to pastor, that's not good for you. It's not good for you. The pastor's job, the elder's job, is to keep watch over your souls.

You know, if you decide to buy a Ford truck, I can't tell you not to do that, just because I think it's a bad idea. But if I see that you have a jealousy and a covetous spirit about that truck, then for me to watch over your soul is definitely in line for me to say to you, I think this is a bad idea.

[18:02] You understand the difference? We must watch over the souls. The application from this is just to remember that pastors, pastors are accountable for the souls of the sheep that God has given him to watch over.

He is responsible and accountable for the souls that he has to watch over. Which makes it kind of sad because you see sometimes in many churches, pastors that come in and don't shepherd the sheep but try to turn the church into an organization to be this grinding wheel of outreach, which outreach needs to happen, but becomes this grinding wheel of outreach where all that we ever do is outreach and the sheep are never shepherded.

There's always balance that needs to happen in these things, but my point is I'll just give you the example that's in my mind. There was a pastor of a church of about 400 and he spent 20 hours every week as a chaplain of the local police force.

20 hours a week as a chaplain to the police force while he had a church of 400 he was supposed to be pastoring and shepherding their souls. I'm not sure how he divided his time. But what I'm saying it's not bad to be that chaplain for the police department, but he has a responsibility to shepherd the souls of God's people that have been given to him.

It also means that if you're not a pastor, you are a sheep. And we all know what we think about sheep. They're wonderful. You're one whose soul needs to be tended after and needs to be watched over and needs to be cared for.

[19:55] Which means that if you're not a member of a local congregation, then nobody is responsible for you. You're like a wild sheep out there in the wilderness wandering around because you've not come into any fold.

And you should. You should be a part of a local congregation, whether it's this one or another one, so that there is a pastor who will watch over your soul. I mean, can you imagine Hebrews 13, 17 and saying to yourself, who are the leaders that you're supposed to submit to and obey if you're not a part of a local congregation?

But it also means that you really don't need to make the pastor's job any harder. I mean, there's definitely room for pastors to grow. I mean, I'm going to get here in just a second and rip pastors up just a little bit, myself included.

But the thing is, is that often there are needs that you have and there are some people not in this congregation. Okay? I'm just telling you, not here. But there's some people that have something going on in their life and they sort of expect the pastor to just know by osmosis or something and just show up and provide whatever is needed but they never share what's going on.

You know, the text of the scriptures puts a balancing thing in here and calls upon you to also communicate your needs.

[21 : 18] Not only am I supposed to watch over your souls but you are to communicate those needs to the pastor so that he knows what to do. Look at James chapter 5. It says that if anyone is suffering if any among you is suffering let him pray if anyone is cheerful let him sing if anyone is sick among you let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

You know, listen you hear about something pastor as a pastor I hear about something I will do my best to try to make myself available and go and minister but sometimes you don't hear about things. So the job is to pastor the job is to elder to shepherd God's people and so we want to make ourselves available to that.

The third thing is the attitude of the elders the attitude of the elders Peter here gives us three not this but this not this but this did you notice that?

Not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you what does that mean? It means that you're not forced to be a pastor you're not forcing yourself to be a pastor when you don't want to be a pastor it's something that you do because you know that God has called you to do it which matches what Paul says in chapter 3 when he says any man who desires this work he desires a good thing Charles Spurgeon wrote in his lectures to students he says that a man can know that he's called by God to be an elder in part because he has an intense all absorbing desire for the work he cannot imagine himself doing anything else he used to do it not under compulsion but willingly as God would have him he used to not do it for shameful gain not to do it for shameful gain but eagerly and what does that mean?

[23 : 22] shameful gain is any kind of profit where he sees that he can have an advantage or leverage in such a way as to gain something it might not be monetary profit but it could be emotional profit there are many a minister who go into the pulpit because they have psychological emotional issues that they need to work out and so they get in the pulpit in order to preach in order to work out their own issues rather than trying to understand what do the sheep need to hear but there are many and it's kind of a trope I guess you could say about pastors and many of them will go into the ministry for financial gain now here you've got two conflicting thoughts and I'll tell them to you okay on one hand there's this rumbling about pastors among pastors that pastors just do not ever get paid enough you might think what really yeah that's that's a that's a thing but the other side is this there's a lot of pastors who really and truthfully work for about 30 minutes a week as they stand here and read somebody else's sermon listen you get paid

I don't know no matter how much it is but you that hourly wage is massive you understand what I'm saying but a pastor can't be in this for himself he must be in this for the sheep for the glory of God when I was a kid my parents were building a house and we'd get up on a Saturday morning and you'd hear my dad or my mom say okay we're gonna go down the house and we're gonna put in insulation or we're gonna you know do some framing or we gotta cut down some trees or whatever and my response was always so how much are we getting paid for that and they were like nothing you live here it's your house you know it's like not my house I don't get to make any choices here but we lived right next door to my grandfather and my grandfather was like a handyman he did all kinds of things for all kinds of people and sometimes he had something to do and say Brady you wanna go with me I said where are you going he says I'm gonna go build a porch I said let's go and I just was without complaint without even asking if he was gonna pay me because he never did pay me

I just went because I wanted to be with him I think that's what Peter's after not for shameful gain but eagerly the third knot is not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock I mean here's the thing what's what's strange about that is that I've got the text in front of me I'm reading the text and I'm telling you what it says therefore I'm telling you what to do that can begin without any kind of personal growth and discipleship on my own that can begin to be exactly this idea of domineering over those in your charge demanding they live a certain way out of your own ideas rather than out of the text of scripture and not doing so in a way where you're living it out right like if I challenge you and say you need to fight your sin so should I if I say you need to reach out to others in evangelism

I need to do that too if I say you need to be hospitable to others I need to be hospitable to others if I say you should read your bible on a daily basis I should be reading my bible on a daily basis and did you know there was a study done of about 1500 pastors they asked the question 72% 72% of the pastors said they read the bible when they're going to teach or preach if you can't read the bible for yourself on a daily basis as a pastor I'm not sure you should be a pastor we're to be examples to the flock pastors I mean pastors are no different from everyone else I mean I'm tempted to sin I get angry I've had all kinds of trials and difficulties happen in my life

I got five grown kids and we could talk about five grown troubles we've been through a period with my mom passing just a couple of months ago go back to 2018 and we've just had a series of death after death after death after death in our family how do you handle the grief are you grieving the right way as a pastor because when you sit down with someone and you have to say the Lord is going to be with you trust the Lord I mean it rings hollow if you've never experienced that and had to fight your own temptations have to be examples to the flock and yes it does mean that pastors are sinners these attitudes here's what I find interesting about what Peter's writing here Paul writes qualifications for a man to go into ministry

[28 : 47] Peter is writing attitudes that men in the ministry ought to have and here's the thing we mess this up all the time we become domineering we become sort of compelled to do this we're tempted by shameful gain and what is it that pastors need well they need you to pray for them they need you to encourage them and they need you to preach the gospel to them your pastor needs you to see him do something he ought not do and he needs you to confront him and say pastor I'm not sure that was a proper attitude but I understand why you did it and I just want to remind you that's the reason Jesus came into this world is for sinners like you and me we need to be reminded of the gospel but you know what I find interesting is that this whole idea of doing things not out of compulsion but eagerly not for shameful gain but eagerly

I think I've got that mixed up you can find other passages throughout the scriptures that say very broad brushed to all of God's people do everything without complaining so just as I as the pastor and any pastor supposed to do this job and shepherd the sheep without these things so you too and all the things that God has called you to do and wives submitting to husbands and husbands loving their wives and fathers not provoking their children and you know not living for the love of money but instead wanting to share the gospel with others you have to do so without complaint and eagerly because God cares about the motives of our hearts in what we do so let's talk then finally about the reward of the elders in our passage it says that the reward comes when Christ comes back that on the day that Christ comes back he will dispense rewards now we need to distinguish between two things everyone who is a

Christian gets the reward of heaven eternal life and being with God forever and we're not talking about salvation here but we're talking about rewards and a lot of people don't like the idea that there are going to be some people in heaven that everybody gets all Christians get heaven but there's going to be some people that get rewards and I don't really like that idea that makes them sound like well I mean you got to work for that yeah the work that we do is living out what he's called us to do in terms of how we minister to others the degree to which we're obedient to Christ in spreading the gospel and discipling others is the degree to which these further rewards come let me give you a couple of examples you can go to 1st corinthians in a couple of places and see where Paul talks about those who work getting their wages or he'll receive his reward or even in one of the letters from John talking about that we don't want to lose what we work for so that we can win the full reward is the idea not that someone is a better

Christian but somebody just was willing and available to spread the gospel and disciple other people I think what he says then is he says that we're going to receive a crown of glory as the

reward now what does it mean to receive a crown of glory I'm going to walk around with a crown that you're not going to walk around with you're going to see me in heaven and go like man I wish to have that crown what is this crown of glory well I'm going to turn over to 1st Thessalonians because we got a lot of similar language here chapter 2 verse 17 through 20 Paul writes he says but since we were torn away from you brothers for a short time in person not in heart we endeavored more eagerly with great desire to see you face to face because we wanted to come to you I Paul again and again but Satan hindered us for what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus Christ that is coming is it not you for you are our glory and our joy to boast is this idea of glory to receive a crown of glory is to receive a crown of boasting and all boasting that is not in Christ is wrong right so this is a boasting that a person who's ministering a pastor who's ministering this is boasting that can be done because Jesus worked through this pastor to sanctify you the joy the glory the boasting crown that is rewarded to pastors is the watching of the people whom they have ministered to for years crossing over into the next life shining and radiating the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ their old robes and flesh of sin fade and are transformed into the resplendent light of the righteousness of Christ as they become perfected images of Christ reflecting his light and his brightness and his glory and his perfections and the crown for pastor is that Jesus used me to do that because I didn't do that I mean you know some of you have looked at me and said you've done so much for our church since you've been here it's like I'm gonna tell you something I haven't done anything if you've grown if you have come to understand something if you have come to love the Lord more that has been Jesus Christ working in you and nothing more than conduit so what do we do because as you look at these things and you think about such a reward it's easy for us to begin to look at how often we've failed

[35 : 54] I think about as a pastor the number of opportunities I've had to speak truth into somebody's life to make a phone call or give a text or have a meeting with somebody in order to pour in disciple and how many of those opportunities I've let slip through my fingers maybe you've had similar experience where you could have spoken something you could have taken someone through something in discipleship and you didn't and here's what I'm reminded of I'm reminded of two things number one God has not planned for a second way of getting that job done of discipling and shepherding other people except to use us but he also understands that we're going to fail to do that job and we're going to fail many times and I just want to remind you that's one of the reasons Jesus came and died upon the cross to pay for that sin to cover it in his blood and hopefully that encourages you to live the way you should and how should we live look at verse 5 verse 5 says this likewise you who are younger

I take that as being those who are less spiritually mature be subject to the elders so that's your role but then it says clothe yourselves all of you both pastor and people clothe yourself all of you with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble we need to grow in humility towards one another seeking out the grace of God because the truth of the matter is with all that Peter has said only when a church of body sticks together with godly leadership can that church endure through suffering only when a church body sticks together with godly leadership can the church endure through suffering and so in the heart of every Christian ought to be god be with our leaders be with our deacons be with our pastor constantly and god help us help us to live in unity and humility together may god give us such attitudes and such hearts and give us the grace we need let's pray to