The Elders

Intro: 1 Pet. 5:1-4 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Peter here addresses this section to the elders, for the purpose of exhorting them. Peter saw the need for exhorting, instructing, encouraging and admonishing elders.

I. Peter’s Credentials
A. A fellow elder, therefore he knew their needs.
B. A witness of the sufferings of Christ.
   1. In Gethsemane and His arrest, Peter was there.
   2. Through the trials, even though afar off, Peter was there.
   3. On the cross, Peter was there.
C. A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.
   1. Luke 9:28-36 “And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And he said to them, Moses and Elias had appeared to my, and spake with thee. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. This was a foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed.
   2. Notice vs. 32 “But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.” This was a foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed.
   3. That glory is Christ.

II. The Message of Peter.
A. Feed or tend the church of God.
B. Take the oversight thereof.
C. Not of constraint but willingly.
D. Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.
E. Being examples to the flock, not as lords.

III. The Rewards.
A. 1 Pet. 5:4 “And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”
B. Receive a crown of glory.
IV. OTHER THOUGHTS.

A. It is an important work.
1. It involves leadership and a church cannot rise above its leaders.
2. If we disregard the teachings of the Bible on elders, we will not prosper.
3. So Christians and elders must know the teachings on the eldership.

B. It is wonderfully rewarding.
1. They are directly related to the work of saving souls.
2. Our work progresses because of their plans, work and prayers.

C. The office of a bishop is a good work.
1. It is good. Two Greek words translated good.
   a. ἀγαθός (agathos) deal more with the intrinsic value
   b. καλός (kalos) deals more with how it effects the beholder.
   c. καλός (kalos) is used.
2. It is a position of work.

D. It must be desired.
1. 1 Tim. 3:1 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”
2. What is it to desire?
   a. 1 Tim. 6:10 “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
   b. The desire of Abraham to see that Holy city; Heb. 11:13-16 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”
3. We need to develop that desire in people and we must begin early.
4. It is not motivated by personal gain or honor, but a love for the opportunity to serve Christ.

E. They must meet the qualifications.
1. It is necessary. Notice some other uses of the same word.
   a. Acts 9:6 “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”
   b. John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
   c. Heb. 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
2. They are given in 1 Tim. 3: and Tit. 1.

F. There are three terms used in reference to them.
1. ἐπίσκοπος (episkopos)—bishop, overseer.
2. πρεσβύτερος (presbuteros)—presbyter, elder.
3. ποιμήν (poimen)—pastor, shepherd.
4. The difference is in viewpoint, and not authority.
   a. What they are to do is *episkopos*.
   b. Their age, wisdom, experience, qualifications and dignity is *presbuteros*.
   c. How they are to do the work is *poimen*.

G. **There are to be a plurality of elders in each congregation.**
   1. Tit. 1:5 “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”
   2. Acts 14:23 “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”
   3. Acts 20:17 “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.”
   4. Phi. 1:1 “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”

Conclusion: The eldership is an important part of the church. They need to be exhorted as Peter was doing.