

# 1 Peter 5:1-4

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, there was a recent television show on the Discovery Channel called The World's Most Dangerous Jobs.! The World's Most Dangerous Jobs, which, as you may have guessed it, is a programme about the world's most dangerous jobs, the jobs which statistically are the most dangerous.

If you're interested, the number one slot was held by the Amazonian Lumberjack, with their oversized chainsaws and climbing gear.

The world's most dangerous job. And with that kind of job, there should be, shouldn't there, all sorts of extra measures put in place to protect the workforce.

It's what we lovingly call health and safety, isn't it? As Peter draws his letter, almost to a conclusion though, he spends particular time here at the beginning of chapter 5 addressing the dangers of the job of a church elder.

And that's who he's speaking to here in these verses. And he gives them health and safety measures. Health and safety measures for church elders, church leaders.

[ 1 : 18 ] Now, we can think back, can't we, over the first four chapters of his letter, and we can see the contrast of the Christian life. So, on the one hand, there's joy now and glory to come in the Christian life, isn't there?

There's the joy and thanksgiving of the certainty of the wonderful, imperishable glory of Jesus revealed at his return, shared by his people.

It's glorious, it's joyful. But at the same time, we've been aware of Peter's concern for the church as they face suffering.

They face the very real danger of suffering whilst in the pagan world. It's a joyful church, isn't it? But it's also a suffering church.

So, his letter is designed to equip Christians to react in the right way to slander and persecution in the world, to give them a robust theology of suffering for the name of Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 30 ] It's a joyful church, but it's also a suffering church. Now, that's universal, isn't it, for all Christians, wherever they are, to some extent.

So, isn't it interesting that his letter ends with a special mention to the elders of the church. Now, by elders here, I think he means older men and those with a particular office.

They're given charge of leadership in the church. It's the older men who have responsibility for the church. And he waits at the end to speak to them, particularly.

So, the feeling is, given all we've seen about suffering and about joy for the name of Jesus, verse 1 of chapter 5, So, let me exhort the elders among you.

They need exhorting. That's a strong word, isn't it? They need pressing. They need warning. And encouraging. Because, if it's a suffering church, as well as a joyful church, it will mean that you, elders, in a unique way, have a very, very dangerous job.

[ 3 : 55 ] The most dangerous job in the world, perhaps. If the church is a suffering church, then the elders or the leaders of the church are especially vulnerable.

Now, I don't think I need, actually, to read out to you the latest list of church pastors and ministers who have been killed or kidnapped or abused or tortured across the world, do I?

Because it's a suffering church, don't we often see the leaders or the elders taking the flack first, when there's persecution?

The suffering and the glory of every Christian will be particularly acute for the elders. It's a very, very dangerous job.

So, he addresses them. He exhorts them. And, you know, the danger of church eldership and leadership is known personally to Peter, isn't it?

[ 5 : 00 ] So, he says about himself in verse 1, he is a fellow elder. And, actually, he's got the credentials to exhort them. He really understands that combination of suffering and of glory.

He's a fellow elder. He goes on to say he's a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

As a witness of the sufferings of Christ, he doesn't mean there, I don't think, that he witnessed Jesus suffer and die on the cross, as in he saw it happen.

I don't think he means it there. The word witnessed there is actually more like the word martyred.

He's saying in my role as an elder, I've died because of the ongoing sufferings of Christ.

I've been a martyr. We know that Peter physically dies after he wrote this letter. But he's saying that I felt the ongoing pain of death, of what Christ suffered then, as I follow him now.

[ 6 : 13 ] I'm allowed to exhort you because I'm there with you in the suffering. I know about the suffering. So think of Acts chapter 12 as one example where we're told in Acts 12 that Herod, the king of the time, lays violent hands on some of the apostles.

He kills James, the brother of John, and then he arrests Peter and locks him in his cell. Earlier in Acts, he's beaten and taken to court.

And eventually, as history tells, he is crucified for being a Christian. A very, very dangerous job. To be an apostle, to be a fellow elder.

So he can and he does exhort these elders in this church. Now, before we dive into this a bit more, it is important at this point that we don't start to think, well, you know, I'm not an elder.

I'm not an official leader in the church as such. So none of this can really apply to me, can it? If this is just talking to elders.

[ 7 : 25 ] We shouldn't think that because this isn't a sort of private section which is taken apart from the whole of the rest of the letter. It isn't a sort of PS at the end of the letter.

By the way, to the elders, you need to know this, but don't worry the rest of the church with it. Now, it's important that both the elders and the rest of the church hear this and realise that we've all heard it together.

So we've heard what the elders need to hear. The elders themselves have heard what they need to hear. And we all know that we've all heard what each other has heard.

It's a corporate message to the elders for the whole church. So questions like, what sort of leaders do we need and why?

What sort of leaders should we be praying for? What dangers do our church elders and leaders face? Are important questions for all of us to ask, aren't they?

[ 8 : 32 ] So it's a message from a genuine suffering elder to the suffering elders for the whole suffering church. So, Peter's big thing for the elders here is the word at the beginning of verse 2.

If you look there. Elders, I exhort you, verse 2, shepherd the flock. Shepherd them. Shepherd them. Just really quickly, can I invite you to turn with me to the end of John's Gospel. So John chapter 21, and verse 15.

So it's on page 1093 of the Bibles. John chapter 21.

1-0-9-4, sorry. So this is a chapter, isn't it? Just at the end of John's Gospel, after Jesus' resurrection.

[ 9 : 50 ] And we get, don't we, to listen in here on Peter's sort of job interview with the Lord Jesus. So Jesus repeats three times in this passage the requirements and the role of his new job for Peter.

So chapter 21, verse 15. When they'd finished breaking, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. Then at verse 16, He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Tend my sheep. And verse 17, He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he'd said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.

[ 10 : 57 ] Simon Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs. Do you love me? Tend my sheep. Do you love me? Feed my sheep.

I hope you can see the pattern there. And you can see the connection in Peter's experience, can't you, of loving the Lord, loving Jesus, and then shepherding his people, his sheep.

So notice, how Peter can't possibly love the church, he can't possibly shepherd the church without loving the Lord, and he can't love the Lord without loving his people and shepherding them.

Now that image of shepherding is massive in the Bible, isn't it? Think of the great King David, who was the shepherd king of Israel. The elders of Israel in the prophets, they were called shepherds. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want, says Psalm 23. Jesus himself says, didn't he, doesn't he, I am the good shepherd. So the good shepherd says to Peter, Tend my sheep.

[12:08] Actually, that word tend is the same word that Peter then uses for the elders of verse 2, back in 1 Peter. shepherd them, tend them.

He uses the same analogy that Jesus uses with him at his job interview for the elders in this letter of shepherding. So a shepherd would live with his sheep, he would eat with his sheep, he would be close to them, he would protect them, he would provide for them, he would lead them to water and to food, he would seek them out when they were lost, he would always think in terms of his sheep, he would go out of his way for their needs, he would suffer the elements, he would be their defender, he would be their martyr, he would be their shepherd.

The suffering church, Peter says, needs shepherds. You need shepherds in your church. the most dangerous job in the world.

So three features that he gives them to what this will involve are now printed on the backs of these sheets if you find that helpful. Three health and safety measures, three knots, if you like, three knots here.

Number one, shepherd the church, verse two, not under compulsion. That's in verse two, shepherd the church, not under compulsion.

[13:39] The church is a joyful place, but it's a suffering church. So the elder needs to be someone who loves the Lord and his people and who is willing.

Not under compulsion. He is willing. Isn't there a danger that if somebody just does the job of a church elder or leader or minister or pastor just because they've been asked to or if they don't do it, well, somebody else won't do it, nobody else will, I'm just filling a hole in church leadership.

If that's the only reason there is a danger, isn't there, that an elder shepherding under compulsion will only take his shepherding so far.

Because it's a suffering church he will soon take the flack. So the temptation to alleviate the pain of that, to water down the preaching perhaps, to compromise will be huge for any shepherd and elder. But it will be even greater for somebody who is only doing the job out of compulsion. They're not willing. Just think for a moment about the Lord Jesus, the good shepherd.

[15:05] The good shepherd. Was he under compulsion to die? It's a good question, isn't it? Was he under compulsion to die, to be a good shepherd? Well, he was in the sense that he was determined, wasn't he, to go and die.

But at the same time he was willing, wasn't he? I lay my life down as the good shepherd. He says, no one takes it from me. He did it willingly, freely, out of service to his God and to his sheep, not because of what his job description says.

Not under compulsion because the church is a suffering church. Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs.

So not under compulsion. Number two though, shepherd the church at the end of verse two, not for shameful gain. Not for shameful gain.

So the church is a joyful church, but it's also a suffering church. So the elder needs to be someone who loves the Lord and his people and he isn't greedy.

[16:17] He isn't in it for financial gain, not for shameful gain. Is he not to think about rewards at all? So is the elder or the minister just a kind of walking mat to wipe your feet on?

Is he just a sort of slave for the church? No. Verse four, if you look there, when the chief shepherd appears back in 1 Peter, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So he is thinking, isn't he, about rewards. He is thinking about the reward of the unfading crown of glory he will receive from the chief shepherd.

The distinction is the elder who is greedy for earthly rewards of money and status rather than heavenly rewards.

Now actually, there are quite a few churches who actually treat their leaders terribly, if I can say that. So I've got mates who work as pastors, who work like dogs and get paid peanuts.

[ 17 : 28 ] Do not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain, the Bible says. But it's the three G's of the elder's temptations.

Girls, greed and gold. Sex, money and power, isn't it? The elder is in a position where all of those three could be available. But more interest in the sheep than himself is this elder, not for shameful gain.

Peter, do you love me? Tend my sheep. Thirdly, shepherd the church, verse three, not domineering over those in your charge.

The church is a joyful church but it's a suffering church. So the elders need to be somebody who loves the Lord and his people and he is not domineering.

I don't know if you remember those words of Jesus to his disciples in Mark chapter 10 when he said, the leaders of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them but it shall not be among you, disciples.

[ 18 : 44 ] Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, to give his life as a ransom.

The contrast that Jesus makes there and Peter makes is between forceful authority and sacrificial service. It is a suffering church and so how easy it is for church elders to find comfort and relief from that suffering by using his congregation as a sort of human shield.

Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep. So, who on earth would be a church elder after this passage?

It's a suffering church. It's a very dangerous job. Why do it? Well, whilst it's a suffering church don't forget the other side of the contrast that we thought about earlier.

We saw it last week, didn't we? Suffering in the Christian life it is always followed by glory. It's also a joyful church. A church heading for glory.

[ 20 : 08 ] Thinking about what it means to be an elder from this passage it's a really daunting thing. It's a really daunting passage. The elder will get the flack of the suffering but they'll get the crown of glory Peter says.

Verse 4 The unfading crown of glory from the chief shepherd when he appears. You know, it's a bit like getting a knighthood from the queen isn't it?

I don't know if you've ever imagined yourself getting a knighthood. I would love it. I can imagine it. I go into the place into the palace into the throne room and I kneel down on the red carpet she says Rise Sir Robert Knight of the realm.

Then I say Thank you ma'am and she says Right, you're done now clear off. Only with Jesus after the knighthood it would be different wouldn't it? He would say Rise Sir whoever it is and instead of a sword on the shoulder you'd get a crown.

He says Right now you don't have to clear off you come and sit next to me on the throne. Wouldn't that be amazing if the queen said that? And you'd stay with him and reign with him in glory.

[ 21 : 31 ] But actually that's the Christian life isn't it? Just look a little ahead in verse 10 which we'll look at next week. He says there To the whole church after you've suffered for a little while the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm strengthen and establish you.

We're in Christ in his sufferings but in his glories. So the elder is called not under compulsion not for shameful gain not domineering but to receive the crown of glory.

We need to pray don't we for our elders we need to pray for our churches let's pray.