**The Ministry of Elders**

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*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:*

*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;*

*nor as being lords over those entrusted to you* [KJV: God’s heritage], *but being examples* [types] *to the flock;*

*and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.* ([1 Peter 5:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.1-4&t=NKJV))

“Sufferings” and “glory” go hand in hand throughout Scripture. The former *always* precedes the latter, and the latter *cannot* be realized apart from the former. Scripture records *the sufferings of Christ on behalf of Christians* ([1 Peter 2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21&t=NKJV)), and Scripture also records *the sufferings of Christians with respect to Christ’s sufferings* ([1 Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV)). *Glory* must then follow, for Scripture inseparably links *sufferings and glory.*

On the road to Emmaus, following His resurrection, Christ rebuked two disciples whose eyes were still closed to the truth concerning *His sufferings and glory*:

*Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*

*Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*” ([Luke 24:25-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.25-26&t=NKJV))

*The sufferings of Christ* refer to the events surrounding “Calvary,” and *the glory of Christ* will be revealed in the coming “Kingdom.” The Son’s ministry in the interim, as our great High Priest, has its basis in the former, with a view to the latter.

The blood shed at Calvary is presently on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary, and Christ is presently ministering in the sanctuary for those in whom the Spirit has breathed life on the basis of His finished work at Calvary; and Christ’s present work as High Priest is with a view to that coming day — that day when He will appear in *His glory*, bringing “*many sons to glory*” with Him ([Hebrews 2:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.9-10&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 5:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.1-4&t=NKJV)).

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John “*saw His glory*” ([Luke 9:32](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+9.32&t=NKJV)). This event, following the mention of both *the sufferings of Christ* and *the sufferings* (*of Christians*) *with respect to Christ’s sufferings* ([Matthew 16:21-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.21-27&t=NKJV)), pertains specifically to “*the Son of man coming in His kingdom . . . after six days* [after 6,000 years]” ([Matthew 16:28-17:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+16.28-17.5&t=NKJV); [2 Peter 1:16-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+1.16-18&t=NKJV); [3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.8&t=NKJV)). For “*the joy* [the day when He shall rule and reign] *that was set before Him*,” Christ “*endured the cross, despising the shame* [not that ‘the shame’ was a small thing, but ‘the joy’ was *so much greater* that He refused to consider ‘the shame’], *and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” ([Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV)).

*The sufferings of Christians with respect to Christ’s sufferings and the glory that is to follow* in [1 Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV) appear in this same framework in [Romans 8:17-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.17-23&t=NKJV), with a condition set forth in verse seventeen:

*. . . if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

The thought is then *continued* in verse eighteen with the statement:

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

The time when this glory will be revealed is then specifically stated in verses nineteen through twenty-three to be following the adoption, when the sons of God are revealed for all to behold.

*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. . . .”*

God is about to bring forth a new order of “sons” (Christians) to replace the present order of “sons” (angels). This new order is referred to in [Hebrews 2:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+2.10&t=NKJV) as “*many sons*” who will be brought to glory; and these individuals — presently “children,” or “sons” awaiting the adoption ([Romans 8:14-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.14-23&t=NKJV)) — are to look upon their present sufferings in the same manner that Christ looked upon His sufferings ([Hebrews 12:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.2&t=NKJV)).

(Along with being called “*children*” [Greek: *teknon*], Christians are also referred to in a present sense as being “*sons*” [Greek: *huios*] three different places in the New Testament [[Romans 8:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+8.14&t=NKJV); [Galatians 3:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+3.26&t=NKJV); [4:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+4.6-7&t=NKJV); [Hebrews 12:5-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.5-8&t=NKJV)]. In each instance, the context deals with different aspects of present faithfulness in the Christian life, with a view to faithful Christians being among those adopted into a firstborn status following events surrounding the judgment seat.

For additional information on sonship and adoption in this respect, refer to the parenthetical section near the end of [The Implanted Word](https://www.koffeekupkandor.com/gods-word-seven.php#The%20Implanted%20Word) in this site.)

Christians are to enter into “*the fellowship* [be like-minded] *of His* [Christ’s] *sufferings*” if they are to have a part in “*the resurrection* [‘out-resurrection’] *of the dead*” and receive “*the prize of the upward call* (KJV: ‘high calling’) *of God in Christ Jesus*” ([Philippians 3:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.10-11&t=NKJV), [14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+3.14&t=NKJV)). Christ “*suffered for us* [‘on our behalf’], *leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps* [*i.e.*, that Christians should enter into His sufferings through experiencing sufferings for Christ’s sake themselves]” ([1 Peter 2:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.21&t=NKJV)).

[1 Peter 1:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.11&t=NKJV), pertaining to Christians rather than to Christ, should literally read:

*. . . when He testified beforehand the sufferings with respect to Christ* [*i.e*., with respect to Christians entering into Christ’s sufferings], *and the glory that should follow.*

Then, in complete accord with the established biblical pattern, *future glory will always follow present sufferings*. The “*glory that will follow*” pertains to “*the salvation of your souls*” ([1 Peter 1:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9-10&t=NKJV)) which will occur after “*the genuineness* [KJV: ‘trial’ (approval)] *of your faith*” ([1 Peter 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.7&t=NKJV)) — an approval that will be rendered at the judgment seat of Christ.

In this respect, when being tested and tried during the present day and time, Christians are told,

*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*

*but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.* ([1 Peter 4:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+4.12-13&t=NKJV); *cf*. [James 1:2-12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.2-12&t=NKJV))

THE PURPOSE FOR ELDERS

The central subject matter throughout the first four chapters of 1 Peter has to do with Christians suffering with respect to Christ’s sufferings, “*according to the will of God*,” with a view to “*the approval*” *of their faith* at the judgment seat, resulting in “*the salvation*” *of their souls*.

*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*.” ([2 Timothy 3:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+3.12&t=NKJV))

Then, beginning chapter five ([1 Peter 5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5&t=NKJV)), elders are introduced. Elders (pastor-teachers [[Ephesians 4:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+4.11&t=NKJV)]) have been placed in the Church to “*Shepherd* [KJV: Feed] *the flock*”; and this flock is described as “*those entrusted to you* [KJV: ‘God’s *heritage*’ — *a present inheritance from the Lord, placed under the care of the elders*]” ([1 Peter 5:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.2-3&t=NKJV)).

In verses two and three, elders, as shepherds, are instructed to lead the flock in a completely unselfish, willing, eager manner. They are *never* to participate in any type of shameful or base gain; nor are they to place themselves in the position of masters, rulers over the flock. They are *never* to occupy a position of power over the heritage placed under their care.

(The word "heritage" is a translation of the Greek word *kleros*. Cognate forms of *kleros* would be the Greek words for “heir” [*kleronomos*] and “inheritance” [*kleronomia*].

*Kleros* is used two ways in the New Testament when referring to groups of individuals [such as the Church]. It is used referring to a segment of the people [[Acts 1:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.17&t=NKJV), [26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.26&t=NKJV)], and it is used relative to an inheritance awaiting the people of God [[Acts 26:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+26.18&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.12&t=NKJV)].

The thought inherent in the use of *kleros* in [1 Peter 5:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.3&t=NKJV) appears to be a combination of both usages of the word seen in the New Testament. That is to say, a segment of Christians [comprising a church] has been placed in charge of elders in a particular area; and these elders’ ministry to the Christians placed under their care is with a view *to leading these Christians into the realization of an awaiting inheritance*.)

Elders are instructed to be “*examples to the flock*” ([1 Peter 5:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.3&t=NKJV)). The Greek word translated “*examples*” is *tupos*, from which we derive our English word “type.” The word *tupos*, as it is used by Peter, points to a pattern of how something either will be or should be. In this case, elders are to govern their lives in such a manner that they become *patterns* of how those in the flock should also govern their lives (*cf*. [1 Thessalonians 1:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+1.6-7&t=NKJV)).

An interesting and significant feature of this section in 1 Peter is the fact that these instructions concerning elders are recorded in concluding verses of a book dealing specifically with present sufferings, with a view to a future salvation — *the salvation of the soul*. And within these concluding verses surrounding instructions given to elders, *the coming glory of Christ* occupies the center of attention ([1 Peter 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.1&t=NKJV), [4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.4&t=NKJV), [6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.6&t=NKJV), [10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.10-11&t=NKJV)).

Elders have been entrusted with *a heritage* (“*those entrusted*” to them), with a view to *the salvation of the souls of those in their heritage*, in connection with *an awaiting inheritance*; and they are to lead this heritage into the things pertaining to this future salvation, which, as explained by Peter in his first epistle, will invariably involve *present sufferings.*

Elders who are *faithful* to their calling will receive an unfading crown of glory when the Chief Shepherd appears. *Faithfulness* of this nature will result in “works,” which will have emanated from “a living” faith, which will be approved at the judgment seat.

*Faithful* elders will then realize “*the end* [‘the goal’]” of their “*faith*,” *the salvation of their souls*. And, as a recompense for *faithfulness* to their calling, they will receive an unfading “*crown of glory*” and occupy positions of power and authority in the coming kingdom of Christ ([James 2:14-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.14-26&t=NKJV); [1 Peter 1:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.7-9&t=NKJV); [5:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+5.4&t=NKJV)).

*Unfaithfulness* on the part of elders, however, will produce results of an opposite nature. Elders *unfaithful* to their calling will not possess “works” that will have emanated from “a living” faith. Instead, works resulting from *unfaithfulness* to one’s calling will have emanated from “*a dead* [a barren] *faith*,” which will be *disapproved* at the judgment seat.

*Unfaithful* elders will then realize *the loss of their souls*, for *faith* will not have been brought to its proper “goal.” Consequently, they will be denied the unfading “*crown of glory*,” and they will occupy no positions of power and authority with Christ in His kingdom.

ELDERS IN THE CHURCH

*Depend upon and be submissive to the ones leading you; for they watch on behalf of your souls, as ones having to give an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable for you.* ([Hebrews 13:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+13.17&t=NKJV))

The preceding is a literal translation from the Greek text, and some variances will be noted between this and other translations. Elders are to conduct their ministries in a specific manner, and individuals placed under their care are to depend upon and be submissive to their leadership. The reason for this relationship between elders and their heritage is twofold:

1) That the elders might be able to properly carry out their God-ordained responsibility of caring for the flock.

2) That the sheep might receive the proper care as they “*grow thereby unto salvation* [‘with respect to salvation’ — *the salvation of their souls*]” ([1 Peter 2:2b, ASV](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+2.2b&t=ASV)).

*1) “DEPEND UPON AND BE SUBMISSIVE TO THE ONES LEADING YOU . . . .”*

Elders possess *a tremendous responsibility*. They are the God-ordained shepherds of the flock. They have received a heritage from the Lord, and, as shepherds placed over the sheep, they are *directly responsible for the spiritual well-being of the sheep*. A high calling of this nature — *the highest calling any man can possess during the present day and time* — demands certain qualifications; and these qualifications are not to be taken lightly, for *the manner in which elders function will directly affect the spiritual well-being of the flock.*

Paul, in [1 Timothy 3:2-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2-7&t=NKJV), sets forth the qualifications that an elder (here called a “bishop”) must meet to be properly qualified to shepherd the flock:

a) He must be “*blameless*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The Greek word translated “*blameless*” is *anepilemptos*. This is a compound word prefixed with the letter “*a*.” The verb form without the prefix is *epilambano*. *Epi* means “upon,” and *lambano* means “to take.” Thus, the two words used in a compound form mean “to take hold upon.” Prefixing the letter “*a*” to the compound form makes the word mean exactly the opposite — “unable to take hold upon.” This is the thought behind the meaning of “blameless.” An elder *must* be an individual that no one can take hold of (lay his hands upon, point a finger at) in the sense of bringing a charge of wrongdoing against him. He must be “above reproach.”

b) He must be “*the husband of one wife*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The construction of these words in the Greek text, standing alone, refers to “a one-woman type man [whether married or unmarried].” However, the context associates this “one-woman type man” with the marriage relationship existing between husband and wife ([1 Timothy 3:4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.4-5&t=NKJV)); and when used in this manner, the construction refers, as in the Authorized Version, to “*the husband of one wife*” (note [1 Timothy 5:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+5.9&t=NKJV) where the same construction is used).

c) He must be “*temperate*” [KJV: “vigilant”] ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The word in the Greek text means “dispassionate,” or “circumspect.” His ability to function must not be affected by personal or emotional involvement. He is to look carefully at all related circumstances before acting.

d) He must be “*sober-minded*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The word in the Greek text means “serious-minded,” “sensible,” “one who shows good judgment.”

e) He must be “*of good behavior*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The word appearing in the Greek text is *kosmios*. This is closely related to the word *kosmos* (from which we derived the English word, “cosmos”), referring to an “orderly arrangement,” as opposed to *chaos*. The thought behind *kosmios* is “order.” An elder must be an “orderly type person.”

f) He must be “*hospitable*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The compound word *philoxenos* appears in the Greek text. *Philos* means “fond of” or “loving,” and *xenos* means “stranger,” “foreigner,” or “alien.” Thus, *philoxenos* refers to one who “loves strangers.” The early Church met in homes, and “strangers” — new converts, among others — were continually being brought into these meeting places. And these “strangers” were to be joyfully received and nurtured along with the others. The same attitude is to prevail concerning “strangers” today. When new converts are brought into the assembly, or when Christians move into a new area, both are to be received in a hospitable manner by the elders, with a view to these individuals occupying their proper place in the assembly.

g) He must be “*able to teach*” ([1 Timothy 3:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.2&t=NKJV)): The Greek word refers to one who is “able and skilled in teaching.”

h) He must not be “*given to wine*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): Wine in countries where churches were established during the first century, as in certain countries in the same area today, was a common beverage. The word in the Greek text refers to one who becomes addicted to wine.

i) He must not be “*violent*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): The Greek word refers to a “belligerent” or “hostile” type person.

j) He must not be “*greedy for money*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): The best Greek manuscripts omit these words. Consequently, this portion is not included in many recent translations. However, the expression is found in [1 Timothy 3:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.8&t=NKJV) (referring to deacons) and in [Titus 1:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+1.7&t=NKJV) (referring to bishops [elders]). The expression in the Greek text refers to “dishonesty” or “disgraceful base gain.”

k) He must be “*gentle*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): The Greek word refers to one who is “gentle,” “mild,” “reasonable.”

l) He must not be a “*quarrelsome*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): The word in the Greek text is *amachos*. This is the word *mache* (“fight”) with the prefix “*a*,” which negates the word. Thus, *amachos* refers to “one who does not engage in fights,” “one who is not quarrelsome.”

m) He must not be “*covetous*” ([1 Timothy 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.3&t=NKJV)): The word in the Greek text is *aphilarguros*. This is a compound word (*philos* and *arguros*) with the prefix “*a*.” *Philos*, as previously seen, means “fond of” or “loving”; and *arguros* means “silver,” referring to “money.” *Philarguros* means “a lover of money”; but the word used in the text, negated by the prefix “*a*,” is *aphilarguros*, which means exactly the opposite — “one who does not love money.”

n) He must be an individual who “*rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence*” ([1 Timothy 3:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.4&t=NKJV)): The word “*rules*” is a translation of the compound Greek word *proistemi* (comprised of *pro* and *histemi*). *Pro* means “before,” and *histemi* means “to stand.” Thus, *proistemi* means “to stand before,” “to take the lead.” Then, the word translated “reverence” [KJV: “gravity”] is from a Greek word (*semnotes*), which refers to “dignified behavior.” An elder is to take the lead role — stand before all others — in “supervising” or “managing” his house, and he is to accomplish this with “dignified behavior.” An elder must manage his own house in this manner: “(*for if a man does not know how to rule* (manage) *his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*)” ([1 Timothy 3:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.5&t=NKJV)).

o) He must not be a “*novice*” ([1 Timothy 3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.6&t=NKJV)): The word in the Greek text is *neophutos*, from which we derive our English word “neophyte.” *Neophutos* is a compound word comprised of *neos* (“new”) and *phutos* (from *phuo* [“to spring up”]). The word refers to “a new convert.” The reason given why “a new convert” is not to hold the position of elder is because he may be “lifted up with pride” and “fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Satan, in the pre-Adamic world, became dissatisfied with his position as ruler over this earth and sought to elevate his throne above his God-appointed position ([Isaiah 14:12ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+14.12ff&t=NKJV); [Ezekiel 28:12ff](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+28.12ff&t=NKJV)). As a result, the *cosmos* became a *chaos* ([Genesis 1:1-2a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1-2a&t=NKJV)), necessitating restoration through divine intervention ([Genesis 1:2-2:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2-2.1&t=NKJV) [2b]). An immature Christian is not to hold the position of elder, lest he, through pride, as Satan, might seek to elevate his office above his God-appointed position (rule over the flock, etc.). Such a move would, after some fashion, have the same results as Satan’s move. In Satan’s case it was *cosmos* to *chaos* relative to the earth; and in the elder’s case it would be *cosmos* to *chaos* relative to the church.

p) He must “*must have a good testimony* [KJV: ‘report’] *among those who are outside*” ([1 Timothy 3:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+3.7&t=NKJV)): In addition to everything else that has been named, an elder *must* possess a good testimony in the eyes of those outside the church (those in the world). As stated at the very beginning of the list of qualifications for elders, he *must* be “above reproach.” An elder *must* be an individual against whom no one can bring a charge of wrongdoing.

Elders obtain a testimony of this nature through *one means alone* — a walk “by faith.” The Greek word translated “*testimony*” [KJV: “report”] in the text is *marturia*. This same word appears in its verb form in [Hebrews 11:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.2&t=NKJV), [4-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.4-5&t=NKJV), [39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.39&t=NKJV), referring to individuals obtaining a “good report [good testimony]” *through faith*. Apart from *a walk by faith*, a good testimony cannot ensue. Through *a walk by faith*, a good testimony cannot help but ensue.

The thought is not as is so often heard today, “Watch your testimony!” Rather, the thought is, “*Walk by faith*, and you will not have to watch your testimony,” *for your testimony will automatically take care of itself.*

Those in the world do not understand a walk of this nature, for they have no capacity for spiritual perception. But they can understand, through their soulical nature, that someone walking “by faith” is not walking in their realm; and though the person may be walking in a realm foreign to their way of thinking, they, because of his actions, can bring no possible charge against him.

And many in the church do not understand a walk of this nature as well. Though such Christians possess a capacity for spiritual perception, they find themselves following the soulical rather than the spiritual man. Then, exactly as those in the world (for both are walking in the soulical realm), they can understand that the person walking “by faith” is not walking in their realm; and they, because of his actions, can bring no possible charge against him.

*2) “. . . FOR THEY WATCH OUT ON BEHALF OF YOUR SOULS . . . .”*

According to [Hebrews 13:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+13.17&t=NKJV) the basic thought underlying the entire ministry of elders is that they are to “*watch*” *on behalf of the souls* of those placed under their care. The word translated “*watch*” carries the thought in the Greek text of *never ceasing*. The elders, at all times, in every facet of their ministry, are to be watching *on behalf of the souls of those placed under their care* (*and, resultantly, their own souls as well*).

A similar expression is used in the Old Testament concerning shepherds in the house of Israel. These shepherds were called “*watchmen*” ([Isaiah 52:7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+52.7-8&t=NKJV); [56:10-11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+56.10-11&t=NKJV); [Jeremiah 6:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+6.16-17&t=NKJV)), and they were *to watch* over the Jewish people (forming the house of Israel) in *an unceasing manner*. This ministry was also on behalf of the “souls” of the ones to whom they ministered, as well as their own “souls” ([Ezekiel 3:17-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.17-21&t=NKJV); [33:2-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.2-20&t=NKJV)).

Paul, describing his own ministry, on a number of occasions in his writings set forth this *unceasing manner* that is to surround the ministry of elders:

*. . . that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.*

*I thank my God always concerning you . . . .*

*always in every prayer of mine making request for you . . . .*

*We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.*

*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work . . . For this reason we also thank God without ceasing . . . .*

*We are bound to thank God always for you . . . Therefore we also pray always for you . . . But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you . . . .*

*. . . without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day.*

*I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers.*

([Romans 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1.9&t=NKJV); [1 Corinthians 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+1.4&t=NKJV); [Philippians 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philippians+1.4&t=NKJV); [Colossians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.3&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 1:2-3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+1.2-3&t=NKJV); [2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+2.13&t=NKJV); [2 Thessalonians 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+1.3&t=NKJV), [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+1.11&t=NKJV); [2:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Thessalonians+2.13&t=NKJV); [2 Timothy 1:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Timothy+1.3&t=NKJV); [Philemon 1:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Philemon+1.4&t=NKJV)).

It should be noted that most of the preceding references concern themselves with Paul ministering “*incessantly*” on behalf of other Christians, in view of *their calling, their spiritual maturity, and the coming kingdom of Christ.* Paul conducted his ministry after this fashion, and elders today are to conduct their ministries after the same fashion.

Note two statements by Paul, with the author of Hebrews summing matters up in this respect:

*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.* ([1 Corinthians 11:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.1&t=NKJV))

*However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.* ([1 Timothy 1:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Timothy+1.16&t=NKJV))

*that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* ([Hebrews 6:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+6.12&t=NKJV))

According to Scripture, an elder’s *incessant ministry* is to be conducted in *a twofold manner*, and both the incessant fashion and twofold manner were set forth in a statement by the apostles to the church in Jerusalem at the time deacons were first appointed: “*but we will give ourselves continually* [a)] t*o prayer,* and [b)] *to the ministry of the Word*” ([Acts 6:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+6.4&t=NKJV)).

Deacons were appointed to take care of certain matters in the church which, if left for the elders, would detract from the ministry into which the elders had been called. The result of such detractions would be that both the elders and those to whom they ministered would suffer spiritual loss. And detractions wherein spiritual loss was presently experienced could, in the final analysis, possibly lead to suffering a future loss — the loss of their own souls, and the loss of the souls of those Christians who had been placed under their care — *when they* (*the elders, together with their heritage*) *appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

Paul’s entire ministry revolved around *prayer* and *the ministry of the Word*, with the uppermost thought in his mind always being the coming “*salvation of the souls*” of those to whom he ministered. Paul’s letter to the Church in Colossae gives a classic example of how he conducted his ministry as a “*watchman*” *on behalf of the souls of those to whom he ministered.*

Because of the “*hope*” laid up for Christians in heaven, Paul did not cease to pray for those in Colossae. His unceasing desire in his prayers was that each individual “*might be filled with the knowledge* [‘mature knowledge’ (*epignosis*)] *of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*,” resulting in these individuals walking “*worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge* [‘mature knowledge’ (*epignosis*)] *of God*” ([Colossians 1:3-5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.3-5&t=NKJV), [9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.9-10&t=NKJV)).

Paul was made a minister of what is known in Scripture as, “*the mystery*,” which is “*Christ in you* [‘*Christ* (*God’s Messiah, the One who will rule and reign*) *being proclaimed among you*’], *the hope of glory*” ([Colossians 1:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-27&t=NKJV)).

The “*mystery*” revealed to Paul through “*the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (personal appearance of Christ to Paul following his conversion [[Galatians 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Galatians+1.12&t=NKJV); [Ephesians 3:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.3&t=NKJV)]) pertained to the Jews and the Gentiles being “*fellowheirs, and of the same body* [the ‘one new man’ *in Christ*]” ([Ephesians 2:13-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.13-15&t=NKJV); [3:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+3.6&t=NKJV)). This is the same “*inheritance*” referred to in [Colossians 1:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.12&t=NKJV). Those in Colossae *had been rendered fit* “*to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light*.”

These individuals *had been rendered fit*, in an initial respect, through being saved, through being placed “*in Christ*.” But the context carries matters beyond that. These individuals *had been rendered fit* by a true exercise of the ministry of elders, as the elders used the God-Breathed Word to lead them from immaturity to maturity, allowing the Spirit of God to progressively work the metamorphosis in their lives.

An individual *must* occupy a positional standing “*in Christ*” in order to possess “*the hope of glory*.” But, as is evident from the text, or any related Scripture, this positional standing does not itself guarantee that the one “*in Christ*” will realize *the hope of his calling*, entering into *the inheritance of the saints.*

And because it is possible for individuals “*in Christ*” to not realize the hope of their calling, Paul made known details surrounding “*the mystery*” to those in Colossae, “*warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom*” in order that he might “*present every man perfect* [‘mature’] *in Christ Jesus*” ([Colossians 1:25-28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.25-28&t=NKJV)).

The Greek word translated “*perfect*” in [Colossians 1:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.28&t=NKJV) is *teleios* — the noun form of the same word also translated “*perfect*” in [James 2:22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+2.22&t=NKJV), from the same root form as the word translated “*end*” in [1 Peter 1:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Peter+1.9&t=NKJV). James refers to *faith* “*made mature*,” “*brought to full development*,” “*reaching its goal*” through *works*; and Peter refers to *faith* being “*approved*,” following the approval of *works*, subsequently reaching its proper “*goal*.”

Thus, these verses pertain to future issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ; and the thought of *presenting* “*every man mature*” in [Colossians 1:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Colossians+1.29&t=NKJV) can only pertain to the same issues, at the judgment seat.

*3) “. . . AS ONES HAVING TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT . . . .”*

Elders, entrusted with a heritage, will one day be called upon to render an account concerning their faithfulness in *continually engaging in prayer and the ministry of the Word as “watchmen” on behalf of the souls of those in their heritage*.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

*Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord* [at the judgment seat], *we persuade men* [to prepare themselves for that which will transpire at this judgment] . . . .” ([2 Corinthians 5:10-11a](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10-11a&t=NKJV))

The word translated “*terror*” in [2 Corinthians 5:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.11&t=NKJV) is from the Greek word for “fear” (*phobos*). Its usage here is very similar to its usage in [Hebrews 10:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.31&t=NKJV) — a verse referring specifically to the people of God (*cf* [Hebrews 10:26-30](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+10.26-30&t=NKJV)):

*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Faithful Christians will have nothing to fear when they appear before the judgment seat of Christ; but for unfaithful Christians, the opposite will be true. This will be “*a fearful* [a terrible] *thing* . . . .”

Too long have Christians been misled into believing that every saved individual will stand as a victor before the judgment seat, to be praised, and then receive a reward. That is not the picture at all. This is *a judgment seat!* And the issues of this judgment will determine every Christian’s position in the coming kingdom of Christ.

(The Greek word translated “*judgment seat*” is *bema*. The word refers to a raised platform upon which a judge or magistrate would stand or sit, rendering decisions. The word is used twelve times in the New Testament; and, aside from two references relative to a future appearance of Christians [[Romans 14:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+14.10&t=NKJV); [2 Corinthians 5:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.10&t=NKJV)] and one reference relative to the future inheritance of Abraham and his descendants [[Acts 7:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+7.5&t=NKJV)], the word is consistently used in connection with a place where negative judicial decisions or acts occurred.

The word *bema* is used in [Matthew 27:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+27.19&t=NKJV) and [John 19:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.13&t=NKJV) as the place where Pilate sat when he delivered Christ to be crucified; it was the place where Herod sat when he made an oration, failed to give God the glory, was smitten by an angel of the Lord, eaten of worms, and then breathed out — expired, died [apparently eaten alive, from the order given in the text ([Acts 12:21-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+12.21-23&t=NKJV))]; it was the place where Paul was brought to be falsely accused, with the chief ruler of the synagogue [Sosthenes] being beaten before the *bema* [[Acts 18:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.12&t=NKJV), [16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+18.16-17&t=NKJV)]; and it was the place where Paul was again brought to be judged relative to his ministry, which set the course for his appeal to Caesar and eventual trip to Rome for trial and sentencing at Caesar’s hands [[Acts 25:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.6&t=NKJV), [10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.10&t=NKJV), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+25.17&t=NKJV)].

Refer to the author’s book, [Judgment Seat of Christ](http://bibleone.net/JSC.htm), for details surrounding Christians before the *bema*.)

The “*watchmen*” of Israel were to one day be called to render an account concerning how they had carried out their appointed ministry, and they would appear at this accounting in one of two fashions:

1) As ones who sounded the warning from God, delivering (saving) their own souls and the souls of those who had heeded the message ([Ezekiel 3:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.17&t=NKJV), [19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.19&t=NKJV), [21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.21&t=NKJV); [33:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.5&t=NKJV), [7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.7&t=NKJV), [9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.9&t=NKJV)).

2) As ones who failed to sound the warning from God, failing to deliver (failing to save) their own souls and the souls of those who were to hear the message ([Ezekiel 3:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.17-18&t=NKJV), [20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+3.20&t=NKJV); [33:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.5&t=NKJV), [7-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezekiel+33.7-8&t=NKJV)).

For the latter, the “blood [the ‘soul/life’ is in the *blood* ([Leviticus 17:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+17.11&t=NKJV); [Isaiah 53:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+53.12&t=NKJV))]” of those who had not been warned would be required at the responsible “*watchman’s hand*.”

Many Christian ministers and teachers are quick to apply these verses in Ezekiel chapters three and thirty-three to the unsaved. But these verses have *nothing* to do with unsaved individuals.

These verses concern *Israel, watchmen placed over the house of Israel*, and *the saving or the losing of the souls of those comprising the house* (*both the watchmen and others comprising the house of Israel*).

And the only counterpart in the New Testament would have to do with *the Church, watchmen placed over the flock, and the saving or the losing of the souls of those comprising the Church* (*both the elders and others comprising the Church*).

*4. “. . . THAT THEY MAY DO THIS WITH JOY AND NOT GROANING; FOR THIS WOULD BE UNPROFITABLE FOR YOU.”*

The sheep are to “*depend upon and be submissive*” to the shepherd’s leadership as he “*watches*” *on behalf of their souls*. Otherwise, the shepherd’s task will not be one of *joy*, and the sheep will not *profit* from his ministry on their behalf.

*Joy* for the shepherd and *profit* for the sheep have to do with both present and future values.

If the shepherd and sheep possess a proper relationship today, the sheep will be properly cared for, realizing “*a profit*”; and this will be to the shepherd’s “*joy*.” Then, before the judgment seat of Christ, when this proper treatment is reflected through the flock (and the shepherd also) realizing their calling, as they are shown to be “*profitable servants*,” there will again be “*joy*” for the shepherd.

However, if the shepherd and sheep possess an improper relationship today, the sheep will be improperly cared for, realizing no “*profit*”; and this will be to the shepherd’s “dismay.” Then, before the judgment seat of Christ, when this improper treatment is reflected through the flock (and possibly the shepherd also) having failed to realize their calling, as they are shown to be “*unprofitable servants*,” there will again be “dismay” for the shepherd (*cf*. [Luke 12:42-48](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+12.42-48&t=NKJV)).

The “salvation” or “loss” of *the Soul* is the present great issue in Scripture confronting every Christian. And the call, relative to this message, is the same for both elders and Christians placed under the ministry of elders: *Give heed to the Word of God!*