

**QUESTION:** What kind of man makes an elder?

## TRN TO 1PT 5

## INTRODUCTION

**ILL—Landmarks** (love getting to see great landmarks to history; whether they be old mansions in TN; monuments in Washington, DC; or old temples in Mexico) These great things are monuments to what's gone on before—to people long dead and deeds long ago accomplished. My next big goal is to make it to Europe—for there are so many older and more amazing monuments to history there!

## PETER/St. Peter's Basilica/Description

## BACKGROUND

Over the last couple of months, we’ve considered the question of what the Bible has to say about elders. We’ve considered the words God and His Spirit used to describe the role: **πρεσβύτερος** (“**elder**”—to describe how those occupying the role served as having inherited authority from Moses), **ποιμήν** (“**shepherds**”—to describe how those occupying the role would provide nourishment, guidance, protection, and healing—like a shepherd with his flock), and **ἐπίσκοπος** (“**overseers**”—showing how they led over the church, the possession of God until He comes).

We then asked how we were to go about finding Godly leaders: how important it was that we **see the need, look for the right kind of men, and trust in the congregation**. But we can't select just any man: we need men who will serve **willingly, eagerly, and by example**—an example of **servant leadership** exemplified in the example of Christ. We need godly men who can serve as like a spiritual **father** over the family of Christ—showing **authority, love, leadership, and faithfulness**. But up to this point, we've largely talked about elders from a theoretical perspective. Today, I'd like for us to approach it from a different perspective: a practical one. Today, I'd like to look at one of the few named examples of an elder in the Bible.

### PETER/St. Peter's Basilica/Description

There's a lot of different groups that claim Christianity—and many of them have different teachings on topics as varied as methods of worship, origin and nature of sin, and salvation, itself. It seems that for every NT teaching, there are at least a half-dozen different and often contradictory approaches. That even includes things as simple as **“who was Peter”**.

Some call him “**Saint**”. Others call him the first “**Holy Father**”. But not one of those titles finds any origin in the Bible. But there is one thing he is called in Scripture: “**elder**”.

**1PT 5.1-3** ~ 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: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you,

*exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

Peter doesn't elevate himself as above anyone, and if anyone could have, you'd think it would be him! But instead, he only refers to himself as "*a fellow elder*". **And why?** Because to him, it was a great enough honor in and of itself: *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 PT 5.4)* To think—that God would promise to this former fisherman whose life was filled with example after example of failure—an *unfading crown of glory*—it was incredible! And it was far more incredible than the most impressive of renaissance structures.

Today, some people stand in awe at Peter. And that's understandable: for he preached the first Gospel sermon and wrote two of the letters of the New Testament. He walked with Jesus—he sat at his feet! And eventually, the man who Christ would refer to as a "**little rock**" (**MT 16.18**) grew to be an elder. But he didn't start that way.

**1TM 3** and **TS 1** are rightly pointed to as the place to find the qualifications of an elder—written by Paul and inspired by the Holy Spirit—and yet, I find it interesting to see that, for much of Peter's life as revealed in the Scripture, he is the last person we would have considered for the role of an elder.

As we stand today at Blackman, we're considering the names of men who have been put forward to serve as elders—a serious decision that could ultimately result in them occupying the same position that Peter and thousands of men like him have occupied throughout history: that of an elder, a shepherd, an overseer. This is not a decision to be made lightly. At times, we can find ourselves stuck—for after all, **could anyone really live up to the standards listed in 1TM 3 and TS 1?** In answer to that question, I would like us to turn to one of only two named elders in scripture: Peter.

**BD1: Sober-Minded and Self Controlled? (1TM 3.2a vs MT 14.28-33)**

**ILL—Rise of Self-Driving Cars** (I love the idea—to be able to just kick back and just turn off my brain a bit) Let's be honest, it's probably a good

**INVITATION**

*pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

*<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

**AP:** As Peter came to know the Prince of Peace, he came to embrace the peace that only He offers. And it changed him, completely! We often, all of us, have struggled with spoiling for a good fight. But like Peter, that doesn't mean we must always be like that. As we grow and mature, we can eventually come to understand what true peace is—"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (JN 14.25-27)

## CONCLUSION

### **PETER/St. Peter's Basilica/Ralph Waldo Emerson**

As beautiful as St. Peter's Basilica might be, it is nowhere as beautiful as the work God and His Spirit did on Peter, himself—changing him from **impulsive** to **sober-minded and self-controlled**, from **ignorant** to **able to teach**, from **violent and quarrelsome** to the opposite, living in and teaching the **peace of God**.

In truth, one of the hardest things for us to accept is that people can change. It's ridiculed and mocked throughout our culture, but it is central to the teachings of Christ. Peter wasn't qualified to be an elder when on the waters of the sea. But he was when he wrote **1&2PT**. He wasn't qualified to be an elder on the mount of transfiguration. But he was as he became an active and effective preacher of the Gospel. He wasn't qualified to be an elder in the Garden of Gethsemane. But he was as he preached and taught the peace of God in his epistles.

The question isn't if a man was qualified 5 years ago or 5 months ago—we all make mistakes and hopefully, we all learn from them and grow from them. The question is if a man is qualified now! If Peter can grow from faithless and unqualified to being one of the only two named elders in scripture, the same can be true to anyone who truly submits to His will and teaching.

idea I don't have one! There's something nice about being able to **give over control** to someone or something else. **Why else do you think so many people drink, do drugs, and give over control and agency of their own lives and responsibilities?**

**EX:** Of the elder, though, Paul requires him to be **sober-minded and self-controlled**. But let's be honest with ourselves. If we've read the Gospels recently, those aren't exactly words we'd use to describe Peter.

**1TM 3.2a** ~ *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled,*

**B.III—After the Feeding of the Five Thousand** (the disciples go out to sea; the storm comes and their lives are threatened; Jesus comes out on the water) *And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and*

*walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (MT 14.28-33)*

### **EX: Does any of that strike you as sober-minded or self-controlled?**

I'm not saying that Peter was wrong for stepping out onto the water. What I'm saying is that this is an example of the character of Peter—he was impulsive. He acted without thinking. And that wasn't just shown here—it was also shown when the Lord was on the cross, and when confronted, he denied him three times (**MT 26.34-35**).

But he didn't stay that way! *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1PT 1.13-16)*

**2PT 1.5-9** ~ *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.*

**AP:** Peter grew—he came to understand the value of **self-control**. While when he was younger in years and in faith, he was anything but **sober-minded and self-controlled**, he grew to be an example of both, and a reminder that the same can be true to all of us—just because we were impulsive and reckless in our youth doesn't mean that we have to stay that way. We can grow and change—just as Peter did!

### **BD2: Able to Teach? (1TM 3.2b vs MK 9.5-8)**

**ILL—In College Considered Teaching Degree** (I was unsure what I wanted to do with my life; was going to get an education degree; after one semester, I realized that it wasn't for me) The fact is, it takes a special kind of person to be a professional teacher—to work with administration and the school system. But while the Paul doesn't require that an elder work in public education, he does reveal that being **able to teach** is a requirement for an elder! *Therefore an overseer must be...respectable, hospitable, able to teach, (1TM 3.2b)*

**B.III—Shortly After Peter's Confession** (Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain; in that moment, they see the Lord transfigured—a portion of His glory revealed) *and his clothes became radiant, intensely*

white, as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” <sup>8</sup> And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. **(MK 9.3-8)**

**EX:** Peter’s amazed with what he sees. He ends up making what, to him, seemed like a compliment—**“Let me build a tabernacle for you, Moses, and Elijah—as equals!”** But, of course, Jesus was anything but an equal to Moses and Elijah. He was infinitely greater! But Peter didn’t understand that. **But, that would change!**

**AC 2.14-21** ~ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is what was through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> “‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>18</sup> even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; <sup>20</sup> the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. <sup>21</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

**AP:** What an incredible example of growth we see in Peter—a man who previously didn’t understand who Jesus truly was and eventually came to preach the first sermon of the church. But that doesn’t mean he was always right. Just ask Paul in Galatia—Peter was horribly wrong in how he treated the Gentile Christians, to the point that Paul had to **“oppose him to his face”** **(GL 2.11-14)**. We all of us, from time-to-time are mistaken. I can’t even count the number of times I’ve been wrong about work, family, and, yes, the Bible. We all have! But God doesn’t call for the elder to have a perfect understanding but rather, to have a teaching heart, always growing in their understanding, much like Peter.

**2PT 3.17-18** ~ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

**BD3: Not Violent or Quarrelsome? (1TM 3.3 vs )**

**ILL—Childhood Games** (whether it was cowboys and Indians, astronauts and aliens, or just baseball—there’s always a competition) There’s fun in competition—it’s why, no matter if the adults keep score or not, the kids always do. There’s something natural about competition.

**1TM 3.3** ~ *not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.* Paul points out a requirement that an elder must not be **violent or quarrelsome**. But this isn’t exactly how we’d describe Peter during the Lord’s ministry.

**B.ILL—Jesus Being Arrested** (Peter and the disciples were waiting in the garden, and then the Jewish leadership comes to arrest him) *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”* **(JN 18.10-11)**

**EX:** Peter was ready for a fight—which, of course, was the last thing that Jesus needed. Again, all of this is fitting with everything we’d seen from him: **impulsive, ignorant, and spoiling for a fight**. But he didn’t remain that way!

**1PT 3.8-17** ~ *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and*