

1 Peter

Chapter 5

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1Peter 5:1-3

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, (2) shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; (3) nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

The word “therefore” links this section with all that has been written previously. The early church used elders to guide the church and to be involved in other activities such as receiving gifts from other churches: “And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.” (Act 11:30) The early church also utilized elders more than churches today for the rule was that every member was to minister to others in the congregation and not give such responsibility to just one or a few people being paid to do so (Eph. 4:11-13). Peter states that he is their fellow elder as he was so appointed by Jesus Christ (John 215-19), that he witnessed the sufferings of Jesus, and that he shares in the coming glory when Jesus returns. The Bible records the presence of Peter at the sufferings of Jesus (John 18:15-27) although it was not his finest hour.

Peter then urges the elders to shepherd God’s people who are in their congregation. The comparison of God’s people to sheep and the Lord as shepherd is common in Scripture. The elders are to feed, lead, guide, and care for in any other way the Christians under their care. They are not to do so under compulsion, meaning that they should not be forced into that position but have a great desire to so serve the Lord. They are then to serve voluntarily and not for a greedy attitude toward being paid although the early church did seem to pay them so that they could have more time to function as an elder. They will also be accountable to the Lord for how they function in their role as elder: “Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Heb 13:17) They are not to let their position “go to their head” so that they view themselves as superior to the people they are leading. All Christians are one in Christ Jesus: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28) Apparently each elder had a certain number of people under his care and their leadership is to be an example to them rather than as a task master.

1Peter 5: 4-7

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (5) You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, (7) casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Of course the Chief Shepherd is Jesus Christ so Peter is referring to the second coming of our Lord and Savior. John quotes Jesus as referring to Himself as the good shepherd: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (John 10:11) "You" seems to refer to the elders or shepherds and Peter writes that they will receive the crown of glory that never fades as a reward for their work with the congregation. Certainly all teachers are included even if they are not formally elected elders of a congregation. James stated that they have a stricter judgment: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." (James 3:1) All Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ but those serving as shepherds will have a stricter judgment:

1Cor 3:9-15 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. (10) According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. (11) For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, (13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (14) If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. (15) If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

1Co 4:3-5 But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. (4) For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. (5) Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

2Co 5:9-11 Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (11) Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

Rom 14:10-12 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. (11) For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." (12) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

In verse 5 Peter tells the younger men to be submissive to the spiritually older members of the congregation. "Clothe yourselves" referred to a slave putting on the apron before beginning to serve. Jesus again serves as the example as He also girded Himself and served (John 13:4-17). Being humble is also a quality God praises:

Mat 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

James 4:6 "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

Christians should then humble themselves. The mighty hand of God in the OT symbolized discipline (Exod 3:10; 6:; Job 30:21; Ps 32:4) and deliverance (Deut 9:26; Ezek 20:34) with both meanings present here. The promise that God will exalt such people at the proper time refers to the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore the entire destiny of Christians is ordained by God whether it be suffering or glory.

The readers are then commanded to cast all their anxiety upon Him because He cares for us. Cast is a fishing term (not surprising with Peter) that means to throw it away toward a definite direction. He does not give any definite meaning to the anxiety but it could have meant the persecution. However the Bible is clear that Christians should not have any anxiety (Matt 6:25-34; 10:19; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11; 12:22; 12:25-26; Phil 6:6). When we do become anxious it is because we are not trusting God's promises including Rom 8:28. There is an article on my web site pertaining to anxiety: <http://livingtheology.com/Anxiety.htm>. Jesus amplified the caring of God for His children:

Mat 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. (30) "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (31) "Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.

1Peter 5:8-9

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

However just because we are under the care of God does not mean that we are inactive. We are to participate in sanctification (Phil 2; 12-13), be sober of spirit, and alert for the many dangers facing Christians including false teachers peddling false doctrine and false brethren among church members. Being sober of spirit means to not let any of the intoxicating influences of the world affect their worldview. Another reason to be alert is that the devil is still very active in the world. Jesus called Satan the ruler of the world three times: John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. Although Jesus defeated him on the cross and the resurrection, he is still very powerful and has a platform as ruler of the world from which to launch his attacks. To devour means to utterly destroy and not merely to knock down. He may have seen lions devouring Christians for the entertainment of Romans but certainly he knew of such events. Satan and his demons do their work through secondary human agents as reported in 2Peter 2:1-22, 1Tim 4:1-2, and Jude 3-16. You can read some ways that Satan attacks the church in letters LT1216-1226 that can be read from my web site: <http://livingtheology.com/letters2012.htm>.

We also read in James 4:7 that when we resist him he will flee. Staying firm in the flesh means that we are not to let any of Satan's tricks influence us to either obey him or be afraid of him. Peter reminds the readers that fellow Christians in the world are enduring the same suffering so they are not unique with the persecutions and afflictions. Fellow Christians can encourage those undergoing such afflictions because they have suffered through them also: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." (1Cor 10:13) When Peter says that the other

Christians have accomplished those sufferings he means that they have come through them victorious.

1Peter 5:10-11

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. (11) To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Now Peter gives them the encouraging news that their suffering will not last forever. It is ordained for a finite amount of time and then God will perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish those whom He called to Himself through Christ Jesus. We also have this precious promise in:

Rom 8:29-30 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Peter is referring to the last stage of salvation: glorification. When Christians can remain firm in their faith about this promise of God all their sufferings for Christ have meaning. Peter ends this section with a doxology as he becomes excited about the promises of God for His children.

1Peter 5:12-14

Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! (13) She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. (14) Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

Silvanus, or Silas, is probably the secretary (amanuensis) who helped Peter in writing the letter. He is also probably the person referenced in Acts 15:22-33; 15:40-18:5; 1Thess 1:1; and 1Thess 1:1. If that is correct he was one of the leading men in the early church. Peter refers to him as his faithful brother. He states that he has written to them briefly with exhortation, meaning to encourage them, and testifying to them regarding his experiences in the faith. He then exhorts them to stand firm in all that he has written them for it is the real grace of God. The grace of God is given to His children without any merit and all Christians are obligated to abide in it.

Who is the “she” of verse 13, where is “Babylon” and who is “Mark”? She is a person who was chosen just as all the true Christians to whom Peter is writing were chosen. She could be his wife (Mark 1:30; 1 Cor 9:5) and Mark could be his son. However most interpreters think Peter is referring to the church since the church is feminine in Greek and Mark is John Mark for there is a lot of Scripture relating Peter to Mark who was younger than Peter and so he could be referring to him as his son. Babylon could be in Mesopotamia, a town in Egypt, or a cryptic reference to Rome. It is most likely that he is referring to Rome so that he is referring to the church from where he is writing this letter.

Closing the letter by asking them to greet each other with a kiss was a common greeting among fellow believers in his time. However the sexes were separated regarding this practice from the third century. Peter then closes his letter with a prayer that each of them who were in Christ would have peace. Peter's first letter begins and ends with peace as he knows that they are all going to have considerable persecution and it is only by the grace of God that they can have peace in such dire circumstances. It is only by Christians emerging themselves in studies of the Word of God and applying it to all their lives that they can have this peace of God:

Rom 12:1-2 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

AMEN!