



1Peter - Lesson 5

Chapter 5: 1-14

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- Last week we began the challenging discussion on trials and persecution
 - In a world attracted to a feel good kind of Christianity, Peter left us with a decidedly unpopular command concerning suffering for Christ
 - Thomas Constable (from Dallas Theological Seminary) offers a concise overview of Peter's teaching when he says:

The most striking feature of Peter's teaching on suffering for Christ is its bold emphasis on the sovereignty and initiative of God, even in the suffering of his own people:

- God allows us to suffer to demonstrate our character (v. 12).
- Those who identify themselves with Jesus Christ will share in the sufferings of our Savior (v. 13; cf. Phil. 3:10).
- Our sufferings will be an occasion of God blessing us (v. 14).
- In addition, our suffering will glorify God (v. 16).
- He then redirected our perspective on suffering by reminding us of the difference in the time and intensity of our sufferings as compared with those of unbelievers (vv. 17-18).
- Finally he concluded with an exhortation to trust God and do right (v. 19).

- Does this teaching fit into our present church culture?
 - Are we prepared to suffer much less inviting it and praying for it?
 - For the privilege of suffering for the name of Christ?
 - What a challenging way to enter into the week of Christ's passion, death and resurrection
- A time of suffering in any group, including the church, places special importance on strong, Biblical leadership
 - When times get tough, the tough get going, but the weak fall away unless good leadership prepares the group and helps hold it together
 - In fact, I find God's timing this morning to be so amazing
 - Here we are on Easter, and it was Christ's resurrection that had the immediate effect of plunging the Apostles and the rest of Jesus' disciples into confusion and disarray
 - The flock scattered and were in danger of disappearing altogether
 - Until the Good Shepherd stepped in to encourage the faithful
 - What happened to the eleven? They were supposed to step into the void and lead the church forward
 - But they faltered
- And so it's only natural that Peter would follow Chapter 4 with an exhortation to the leadership of the church to uphold their proper responsibilities in the face of persecution

1Pet. 5:1 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,

1Pet. 5:2 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;

1Pet. 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

- With his final “therefore “ application, Peter sets his gaze squarely on the church’s leadership, and so will we this morning
 - Peter gives the elders of the church an exhortation (I exhort you)
 - An exhortation is more than merely encouragement or request
 - It is an appeal made based on a compelling argument or circumstance
 - We exhort someone when the necessity and sensibility of our appeal are self-evident
 - We beseech them to respond as they know they must
 - Peter doesn’t begin his last section of his letter as he might have
 - He doesn’t say “I command you as an apostle of Jesus Christ...”
 - He could have said that certainly
 - Instead, Peter makes his appeal on the basis of a shared experience and obligation
 - He refers to himself as a fellow elder, a fellow under-shepherd
 - *Sumpresbuteros* – only occurs here
 - Not a chief elder, but *sum* – meaning together
 - Peter was with them as an equal in this issue of suffering
 - He witnessed the suffering of our Lord, so he understands the road he’s asking the church to walk
 - He is also a partaker in the promised reward of sharing in Christ’s glory, so he has the same obligation to honor the Lord through obedience
 - In other words, Peter must be prepared to follow his own advice
 - And follow it, he did, all the way to an upside down cross as church tradition teaches
- What Peter establishes in this opening verse is a Biblical standard we often see repeated in secular circles, but sadly it’s becoming less and less common in the church
 - The principle is, never ask someone to do something that you are not prepared to do yourself
 - Military commanders are taught this axiom of leadership
 - Successful parents adopt this viewpoint rather than “Do as I say rather than as I do”

- Coaches live by this standard, because who will receive instruction from a coach who doesn't model it in their own game?
- This is the essence of Peter's opening statement
 - He exhorts the church to follow his lead, to do as he does
 - He repeats this thought in verse 3
 - The leader is to prove to be an example to the flock
 - To actually live according to his own teaching
- Peter never made his teaching or commands on the basis of absolute apostolic authority, though he could have done so
 - He preferred to lead by example and to model appropriate behavior in his own walk
 - This is the one true model for Biblical leadership
 - It is the antithesis of hypocrisy
 - Leadership that leads in action rather than in words alone
- Our leaders should follow in Peter's footsteps
 - For example, if leaders want to stress the importance of Bible study, then they can best do that through their own participation in congregational Bible studies
 - If leaders want to encourage their congregation in the regular practice of prayer, they will find no more effective means than to pray with the congregation
 - If a leader wants the congregation to give generously to the work of the church, then the leaders should be a model of generosity
 - Likewise, the principle often works in reverse
 - If the flock is suffering from various ills
 - Whether it be inappropriate gossip, or poor attendance at church functions or lack of compassion for the needy or a general hesitation to share the gospel with others, etc.
 - So often we need look no further than leadership to find the seeds of that concern
- I think Peter makes his appeal here on the basis of a shared experience and obligation rather than on the basis of his apostolic authority *because* he believes he can make a stronger case based on his life example than he could merely by his title
 - There is a lesson in that for all of us, and especially for leaders
 - Our strength and usefulness as the Lord's under-shepherds is directly proportionate to the success of our personal walk of obedience and humility
 - Then in verse 2 Peter continues his instruction by telling the leaders they...
 - Should shepherd the flock of God
 - Not under compulsion, but voluntarily
 - According to the will of God
 - Not for sordid gain
 - With eagerness

- Not lording over those under their care
 - But living as example
- In verses 1-3, there are a series of important principles for church leadership we need to understand
 - First, verse 1 says a leader is to be an elder
 - Now we have come to use that term as an office, but Peter is using the term more as a qualification than as an office
 - The literal meaning of the word is old man
 - In other words, Peter calls himself a fellow old man
 - And while the term is also used to describe an office or position
 - It also described one of the inherent qualifications for becoming an elder in the church
 - You must be an older man
 - This confirms what Paul teaches in his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus when he describes leaders as men who have obtained to certain level of spiritual maturity
 - The Bible views age as a necessary – but not sufficient – component of wisdom and spiritual maturity
 - You can't become spiritually mature overnight, so age is a necessity
 - You can't fake age

The Marx Brothers were originally a kid act, so they traveled at half-fare, even after the brothers had reached their twenties. Minnie [their mother] insisted they were still thirteen...

On one trip the conductor contested the mother's claim, saying 'that kid of yours is in the dining car smoking a cigar and another one is in the washroom shaving.' Minnie shook her head sadly. 'They grow so fast!'"

- But then not all those who are older will automatically have spiritual maturity either
 - The believer is expected to grow spiritually as they grow older physically
 - Also note that leaders are not called to a higher level of maturity than all believers in general
 - All believers should attain to the same degree of maturity
 - But only those who have actually done so should be called into leadership
 - And obtaining that maturity requires time in our walk and in our study
 - So leaders should generally come from the older and more mature members of a congregation
 - We should not elevate men into leadership positions too quickly or at too early an age
- In verse 2 Peter then says the leaders must act as shepherds of the flock
 - The word for shepherd (*poimaino*) means to tend

- To feed the sheep, to lead them and guide them to safe places
- To guard them from danger
- To keep them in order and moving together
- This is the role of a leader of the Lord's flock
 - It's not a CEO
 - It's not an administrator or dictator or commander
- First and foremost, the role of an elder is as a shepherd, a pastor who cares for the flock
 - Which means the church isn't ours
 - The leadership doesn't have a right to their position nor should they expect their flock to place them on a pedestal
 - They should not lord over their flock, as Peter says in verse 3
 - Not an oppressive kind of leadership, but rather one done by setting the right example
 - It's been said that a shepherd can't drive the flock ahead, but must lead it from the front
- Next, leaders must serve voluntarily
 - Now that may seem a bit odd, since we don't typically see this happening today
 - But in some parts of the world there is a strong desire to draft people into leadership
 - Third world churches where women vastly outnumber men, we may see women pressing men into service as elders
 - Biblically, leaders must volunteer
 - But notice how that desire arises in the first place
 - Point 4: they serve by the will of God
 - A man who discovers a sincere desire to be an under-shepherd and to serve God's people in a leadership role is showing evidence of God's prompting
 - That's why compulsion of any kind is strictly prohibited
 - We want to see a man earnestly desire to lead and serve God's people because that desire is a reflection of God's choice
 - God raises men up to lead in His church
 - And we should expect to see that desire evidenced in the voluntary desire of a godly man to serve in leadership
- Next, the leader is not to find his source of desire in sordid gain
 - Sordid gain means a greedy, dishonest kind of gain
 - Serving because of a desire to turn that service into a source of personal material benefit
 - We should notice that Peter's instructions were not that a man should not serve for gain
 - In other words, Peter didn't prohibit being paid for service

- To the contrary, a leader in the church has every reason to expect reasonable, fair payment for their devoted service to the church
 - This principle shows up time and again in the New Testament
 - It is to a congregation's shame if they are unwilling to support those who look out for their spiritual needs
- But the leader must never fall prey to love of money and seek to use God's people in this way
 - Fundamentally, we're talking about serving out of a love for the Lord and His people rather than to see what we can get out of it
 - Some rules of thumb we could use to guide us here are:
 - A leader who takes his income from the congregation should not enjoy a lifestyle substantially better than the congregation as a whole
 - His commitment to serve should not vary according to the level of compensation
 - His heart to serve and even his service itself should begin even before the compensation is available
- Finally, the leader should be eager to serve
 - This goes hand in hand with everything we've already said, but it puts everything in perspective
 - And it offers something of a warning to leaders
 - If a leader wakes up one day and finds himself dreading his opportunity to serve
 - If the joy is gone, and the desire to serve is replaced with a compulsory obligation
 - If the privilege has become burden
 - Then that person has ceased to be a shepherd and should step down
 - They are no less an elder
 - After all, they are still old and presumably are still spiritually mature
 - So their qualifications are still there
 - But they should no longer carry the responsibilities of the job
 - And give them over to someone who is eager for the opportunity to serve God's people
- These are the essential characteristics you want to seek in your leader
 - And particularly if the aim is to raise strong, healthy sheep
 - Sheep who are themselves being prepared to stand in the day of their testing
 - And likewise in our day, good leadership is essential to a healthy and strong church
 - And the reward to leaders themselves is found not only in the health of the congregation, but in true eternal reward

1Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading

crown of glory.

- Leaders who have been faithful in their calling can be assured that at the moment they stand before Christ, the Chief Shepherd, they will receive reward
 - Peter calls this reward the crown of glory, and it's unfading
 - Meaning it's eternal
 - It's a reward that comes at the moment we see Jesus and it lasts forevermore
 - The word for crown is *stephanos*, which is the word from which we get the name Stephen
 - It's one of two words for crown used in the New Testament, the other being *diadem*
 - *Diadem* refers to the kind of crown that only royalty may wear
 - A crown you inherit, a crown you cannot earn but must have bestowed upon you
 - This is not the kind of crown we're talking about here
 - This is a crown that is earned and awarded based on performance
 - This was the kind of crown awarded to Olympic athletes at the end of a race
 - Paul uses this word in describing a different kind of award he expects to receive

2Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- These aren't metaphors for salvation
 - The context and usage are completely different
 - We're talking about the rewards earned by believers for their works done in faith following salvation (laid up)
 - Awards that are not given until the appearing of Christ
 - Faithful leaders can look forward to the day when they may receive a crown for their service
- Now I know not everyone in here is a leader or even interested in becoming one
 - So in case you were tempted to tune out a little at this point, Peter catches the rest of us in the next few verses
 - Because good leadership can achieve virtually nothing without good followers

1Pet. 5:5 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.

1Pet. 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He

may exalt you at the proper time,

1Pet. 5:7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

- Peter begins with younger men, those not old enough to be elders yet, your duty is to obey your elders
 - And actually, the word in Greek means younger ones, so it is speaking of everyone; men and women
 - We all obey our elders
 - The church is fundamentally not a democracy
 - The scriptures tells us we are slaves to Christ, not volunteers
 - And those appointed over us should receive our obedience as they seek to obey Christ
 - As the book of Hebrews says:

Heb. 13:17 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.

- We owe our leaders a cooperative, loving, submitted spirit so that we can help them in the difficult tasks they carry on our behalf
 - And in fact, as Hebrews says, when we resist them, we only hurt ourselves
 - Peter connects our obedience to our elders as an issue of humility and submission to God Himself
 - Peter has come back once again to emphasize that our willingness to submit and to obey is really an issue of sovereignty
 - If we fully appreciate the unbound, unquestioned authority that God possesses in working out all things according to the counsel of His good and perfect will
 - Then when circumstances come upon us, whether good or bad
 - And when leaders direct us in ways we may not understand much less agree with
 - We won't fight back, or complain or retreat
 - We won't quietly slip out the back door and find a new congregation where they do things the way we like
 - We will prayerfully seek to know God's will and accept that His will is at work through our leadership
 - So long as that leadership conducts itself according to scripture and adheres to the doctrines and principles found therein
 - We can then confidently cast ourselves on God
 - All our cares, anxieties and worries
 - Like a sheep trusting its Shepherd to take it home safely
 - But then we do need to be prepared ourselves

- We aren't merely passengers on a cruise ship while our elders make the beds, and wash the dishes
- Rather, we are on a warship, and it's all hands on deck

1Pet. 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1Pet. 5:9 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.

1Pet. 5:10 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.

1Pet. 5:11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Our corporate responsibilities are:
 - First be sober, on alert
 - My translation adds sober in spirit, but I think Peter is making a general statement about our state of mind as well as our spiritual countenance
 - We all need to get serious about this war we are engaged in
 - Serving in the kingdom of Christ is serious business
 - And it begins even now as we serve Him in this world
 - We don't just pass time here waiting until we die and then eternity begins
 - It began the day you were saved, and now you're on the clock
 - Because our enemy hasn't stopped his work
 - The devil, Peter says, is prowling like a lion
 - When Peter says "your adversary", Peter emphasizes that the devil is our personal enemy
 - He knows us in that way
 - And he sees us as prey
 - To be devoured
- How does a shepherd protect the flock from a roaring lion?
 - First, you have everyone in a group, because there is safety in numbers
 - Secondly, the shepherd and the sheep are alert and ready for the attack
 - And when the attack comes, the flock resists the enemy
 - Our success in this battle comes from three steps
 - Be alert and ready for these attacks – not asleep at the wheel, blissfully ignorant
 - Secondly, be active in resisting the enemy – take steps in preparation: Bible study, prayer
 - Finally, place your trust in the One who is able to make you stand in the face of these attacks

- He will perfect you, confirm you, strengthen you, and establish you
- Even when the attacks mean the end of your life
 - Because, no matter how long they last or what the outcome may be, in the end you will see the glory promised to believers
 - To Him be dominion, forever
- Peter closes with a few personal notes which we will read to conclude the letter

1Pet. 5:12 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!

1Pet. 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

1Pet. 5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

- You know, when we began this letter, I mentioned how ironic it was, in a sense, that Peter would be the one to write this letter
 - He was the man who betrayed Jesus in a time of testing
 - He was the one Jesus said that Satan had asked permission to sift along with the other disciples
 - And he was the one who cracked under the pressure of Christ's persecution
- Yet Jesus restored him
 - And then set him on a course to restore his brothers
 - And in this letter, Peter seeks to do the same for all the saints including for us today
 - That we would be prepared for that day of trial, for a day of suffering potentially, but a day we may stand rather than fail