



TITLE

SUBTITLE

1 PETER 5:1-14



LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

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His final word “Peace to all of you that are in Christ.” “Peace” was in his greeting at the beginning of his letter and it is in his closing, as well. It reflects the very common Hebrew blessing “Shalom.”



In Chapter 5, Peter reminds us of the importance of networking with fellow Christians as we strive to live out our Christian life in a hostile world. He has words of encouragement and exhortation, which can make our “networking” beneficial. He reminds us that we are all in this together!

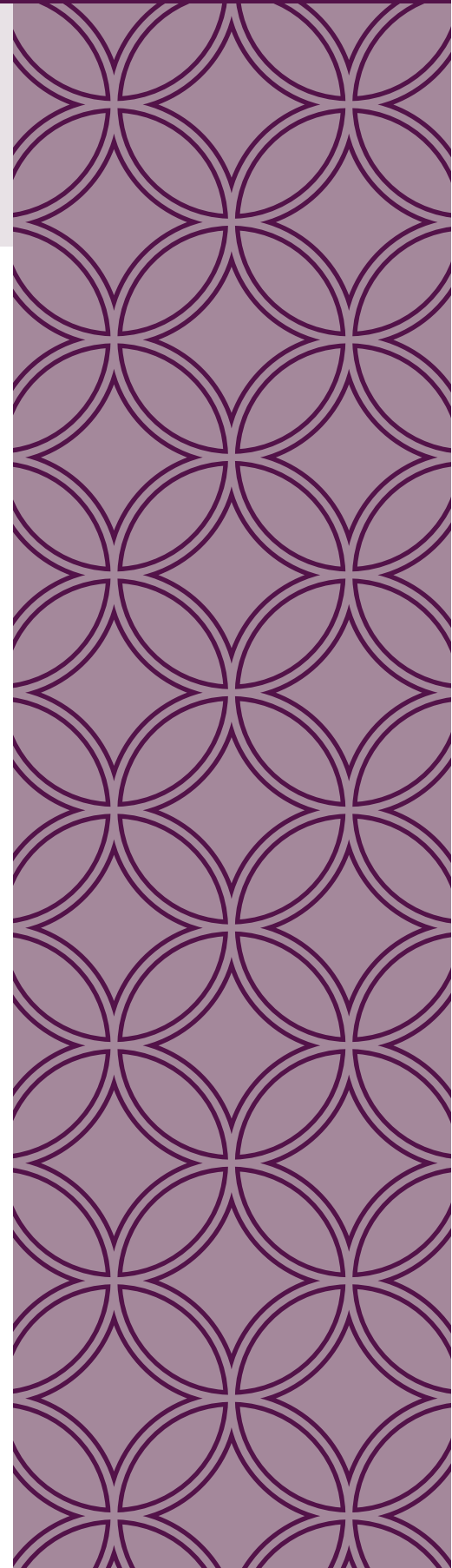
THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFUL PASTORS

PETER 5:1-4

Peter begins this chapter with a Greek word “oun,” which the RSV translates “so.” This connects his exhortation for the church leaders to what he had just written about the trials and tribulations that Christians might have to endure. What he had to say to the “elders” takes on special urgency.

The Greek word translated elders is “presbyterous.” The basic meaning of the word is simply “older men.” From early on in the history of Israel, older and spiritually wiser men were chosen to provide leadership. The Jerusalem church followed a similar plan (Acts 11:30; 21:18). The term “elder” is equivalent to our word pastor.

Peter calls himself a “fellow-elder.” He wants the elders to realize that the advice he gives them comes from someone who understands the great responsibilities they have. As additional incentive for them to “listen up,” Peter reminds them that he was a “witness to the sufferings



of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed.” (See Matthew 17:1–8).

His directive begins with the Greek word “*poimanete*,” an imperative. Literally, it means “be a shepherd!” This is the same imperative that Jesus used in John 21, when he reinstated him to the apostleship. Three times Jesus said “Feed my sheep!” Shepherding embraces everything that sheep would require: protecting, leading, guiding, and feeding (see Psalm 23). Peter also reminds them that it is “God’s flock” they are to tend. They are only under-shepherds. God Himself is the Great Shepherd (Psalm 100:3; Ezekiel 34:7ff). One day they will be called before Him to give an account of how they took care of God’s sheep in their charge. They have an awesome responsibility! (1 Corinthians 4:1–2; Hebrews 13:17).

Peter’s first caution for the pastors has to do with attitude “not by constraint but willingly.” Phillips translates this “... not because you have to, but because you want to.” Peter strongly implies that unless you really want to do the job of shepherding, you don’t stand a chance of being helpful to your parishioners.

The second guideline is “not for shameful gain, but eagerly.” The Living Bible paraphrase “... not for what you will get out of it” opens up all kinds of possibilities. Pastors will be ineffective as shepherds if their motivation is wrong. Some may do it for the prestige it might bring; others because they like to be “in charge.” For some it’s just “a job.” Today’s English Version (ABE) probably comes even closer to Peter’s meaning “Do your work not for mere pay, but from a real desire to serve.”

Directives one and two speak to the topics of attitude and motive, the third addresses the topic of style of “pastoring.” Peter says that pastors should not carry out their oversight of people in

a domineering style. The word for “domineering” is the same word Jesus used when He spoke to His disciples in Mark 10:42. Jesus applied it to the rule of the “great ones among the Gentiles.” Such a style has no place within the Christian fellowship. They should, rather, lead by their good example. The authority of God’s household is one of truth and love that gently leads to persuasion.

Typical of Peter, we have in verse 4, the added incentive, which seeks to have his readers look beyond the moment. If they will live up to these guidelines, they will one day in the future receive a great reward. “And when the chief Shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.” What Peter has said to the pastors applies equally as well to all who are in positions of leadership within the fellowship of the church, at whatever level.

HUMBLY SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

1 PETER 5:5

The Greek word “*omoioos*” (“likewise” — RSV) with which begins verse 5, tells us that Peter continues the discussion along the same line only now he directs attention to the attitudes of those who are being led. He singles out one segment of the congregation, “you that are younger.” More than older mature people, it is youth who have a problem with accepting the authority. Back in the turbulent 60’s, youth of our nation had this slogan “Don’t trust anyone over 30!” Granted that while this was a bit extreme, it is quite characteristic of young people. As they struggle to “find themselves,” they often place a low value on the wisdom and guidance of older people.

His word to the youth of the Christian fellowship is simple, “Be subject to the elders.” Don’t just “go” with your natural, and sometimes rebellious, youthful feelings. Recognize that the elders and older people, in general, are God’s gift to you to help you through difficult times and keep you from making some big and costly mistakes. Your

loving Father in heaven asks you to listen to them and to follow their leadership, especially in matters spiritual.

In fact, Peter goes on to say, this applies to everyone, regardless of age. If the pastors are going to be effective in their ministry and if the fellowship of the believers is going to be all that God intended it to be, the spirit of “submissiveness” must prevail. Peter puts it this way: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another” (v.5). The Greek imperative that Peter uses for “clothe yourselves” is “egnkombosasthe.” The root meaning of the word is “to knot, or to tie.” The noun form referred to the white apron of slaves (egkoombooma) which was fastened around the waist. We need to let those around us know that we are ready to serve them by displaying an attitude of humility. Peter remembered how Jesus did that in the upper room. He girded Himself with a towel and stooped to do the work of a slave (John 13:4). Afterward, He told them that this was an example for them to follow.

Peter supports this exhortation with a quote from the Old Testament (Proverbs 3:34): “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” The spirit of humility ranks high on God’s list of personal qualities for His followers. It is the lubricant which enables a body of believers to live and work together without the friction that pride causes.

HUMBLY SUBMIT ALSO TO GOD

1 PETER 5:6-7

In verses 6-7, Peter mentions another area in their lives where it is important to be submissive. It has to do with circumstances of suffering and persecution, which this short letter had been addressing. This is what Peter meant by the “mighty hand of God” in verse 6. They were to

regard their difficulties as something that, in the final analysis, God was permitting. They were to remember that God is still in charge. The human tendency is to resent and rebel, to murmur and grumble. Peter’s admonition is “let yourselves be submissive.” This involves not just a passive resignation, but an active cooperation. It’s like a man who has a medical problem. He seeks out a qualified doctor and then submits himself to his or her advice and treatment. It is only when we willingly “submit” ourselves to our God that He can help us to spiritual health.

Any concerns that come with this whole process are to be turned over to God: “Cast all your cares upon Him!” The tense of the Greek word (v.7) indicated that this is to be done in a conscious, deliberate action! The incentive which Peter gives is a deceptively simple statement, “for He cares for you.” Yet, it expresses a belief, which is unique to the biblical faith. Other religions operate with the notion that somehow through rituals, prayers, and ceremonies their constituents need to awaken God’s interest and concern. Christians begin with the confidence that God already cares and they build on that. This was especially important for them as they faced the hostility of the world.

BE READY FOR THE CONFLICT

1 PETER 5:8-11

After telling them that God will take care of all of their concerns, Peter reminds them that this does not mean there isn’t anything for them to do. It should not lull them into a false sense of security. They would need to be “sober and watchful” (v.8). If they haven’t figured it out for themselves by this time, Peter explains to them that behind the antagonism that was growing with each day they should see the person of God’s arch-enemy, Satan. He is on the prowl, like a roaring lion looking for a meal. The roar of the king of

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the jungle has a terrifying effect upon lesser animals who hear it. The hostility and the threats of worldly people and governments are like the lion’s roar. Satan will try to use it to intimidate the Christians, hoping to reduce them to a state of helpless terror in which they will be unable to resist his attacks and become his prey.

Don’t let that happen to you, Peter tells them. Don’t let the ominous roar of persecution intimidate you. Then Peter gives advice that may surprise us. He doesn’t tell them to “go for cover.” In verse 9 he says, rather, that they should take a firm stand against him: “Resist him!” The word resist implies active, determined opposition. And, it suggests the encouraging thought that such a confrontational stance against Satan will be successful. James (4:7) says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” You can count on this. It will be victory for God’s kingdom. No matter what the outcome from the point of their life on earth, they can be sure that God’s kingdom will be advanced. To give them further incentive, Peter reminds them they are not alone in experiencing difficulties. Brothers and sisters in the faith all around the world are paying the same price as they are. Keep remembering that!

As he wraps up this letter of encouragement, Peter directs them to look at their troubles from a new perspective. They should see beyond the troubles at hand. He reminds them (v.10) that the “God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ” is still in charge, no matter how it might seem. Because He is, there is a time limit on the sufferings. Peter says it will be “a little while.” For some, it will be a “little while” because they will die. For others, no matter how long it lasts, it will still be just “a little” when compared to the glory of heaven. Both groups have the assurance that God will be on hand personally to pick them up and “restore, establish, and strengthen you.” Having said this, Peter (v.11) winds up this letter with a short doxology “To Him be the dominion forever and ever!” “Three cheers for God!” The Greek word for dominion is “*kratos*.” It is interesting to note that in the New Testament it is used exclusively for God. It describes the ability to keep under control, to acquire and to retain mastery over all things. God is in charge always!

THE CONCERN OF OTHERS — A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

1 PETER 5:12-14

Bible scholars pretty well agree that it was at this point (vv 12–14) that Peter may have taken the pen in his own hand and added this as a post-script. “By Silvanus,” (v.12) may very well mean that Silvanus was going to deliver this letter personally (see Lesson 1). It may also mean that he was well-known to the readers, and that he had actually once even worked among them. All of this shows the concern that Peter had for them.

“I have written briefly,” suggests that there were many other things that Peter might have included. What he did write about was his biggest concern. He hoped that all of them would accept his exhortations, and above all that, they would stand fast in the true grace of God. “She who is at Babylon (v.13), who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings.” Peter wanted to assure them that the brothers and sisters in Rome felt a strong bond with them and would hold them in their thoughts and prayers. The same goes for Peter’s reference to “my son Mark.”

His final directive in verse 14: “Greet one another with the kiss of love.” Here Peter follows the example of his co-worker Paul (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; I Thessalonians 5:26). A kiss was a sacred sign of agape love and unity. In the Western Church, it was customary

at the communion service until the 13th century, and in some of the Eastern and Western churches to this day, it is retained in a modified form. The Living Bible paraphrases it to say, “Give each other the handshake of Christian Love.”

His final word: “Peace to all of you that are in Christ.” “Peace” was in his greeting at the beginning of his letter and it is in his closing, as well. It reflects the very common Hebrew blessing “Shalom,” but when he adds the words “to all that are in Christ Jesus,” he “New Testamentizes” the ancient greeting. He makes a strong statement that true peace can belong only to those who are firmly linked to Christ by faith and to one another in that loving fellowship which is His Church on earth (Philippians 4:7).

Did you find anything in Chapter 5 of Peter’s First Epistle that you can add to your “Personal Mission Statement?” May God help you to live your “Mission Statement.”

Soli Deo Gloria!