

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,

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;

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

5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

I Peter 5:1 begins with the word "therefore" indicating the close connection to the preceding verses. Peter has been warning the church about the "fiery ordeal that is coming upon them for their testing" (4:12) and says, in verse 17, that this fiery test is actually judgment that begins with the household of God. The judgment is to test the church, to separate the believing from the unbelieving. It is better to suffer persecution according to God's will as a Christian, than renounce Christ and face a worse judgment later. Chapter 4 concluded by telling those who suffer to entrust themselves to a faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Ezekiel 9 is somewhat analogous to these verses, though Israel is being judged for her disobedience. In this passage God tells His messengers:

"Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst." [Like blood on the doorpost at the Passover.] But to the others He said in my hearing, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity, and do not spare. Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary [same idea and words as here in 1 Peter 4:17]." So they started with the elders who were before the temple." (Ezekiel 9:4-6)

If judgment is to begin with the household of God, then it is logical to assume that it will begin with the leaders first. Rather than draw back from following God, Peter is encouraging the elders to lead the church into making the right decisions though they may result in persecution.

Elders have a very solemn role in the church. The qualifications to be an elder are stringent (Titus 1:4-9; I Tim. 3:1-7). They are to be shepherds (5:2), guiding, leading, feeding, and protecting God's flock. In John 21:15-19, Jesus had asked Peter to feed and care for His sheep. Acts 20:28-30 tells the elders to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." I Peter 5:3 says they are to be examples. "Exercising oversight" (5:2) expands on the manner in which the elders are to carry out their assignment of shepherding the flock. The verb means "to oversee, to care for"; it depicts the pastoral function of overseeing or caring for those under their supervision. The related noun is commonly rendered "bishop" or "overseer." This indicates that there is no difference between "elders" and "bishops" and in the New Testament these two terms are used interchangeably of the same men

(Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5-7). The distinction in terminology is that "Elder" points to someone who is mature, which qualified the individual for the office; "bishop" (overseer) indicates that the duties of the office involve spiritual oversight.

The oversight is qualified in three ways:

1. not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God
2. 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.

NOT UNDER COMPULSION

Jesus said in John 10:12-13, "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep."

As the good shepherd, Jesus lays down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11). He is also the Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4), and all other shepherds are directly accountable to Him. Just as Christ followed the will of God, leaders also lead "according to the will of God" (I Pet. 5:4), following in Jesus' footsteps (I Pet. 2:25).

Considering that the elders were to take the lead in suffering, it was essential that they still took the position willingly.

NOT FOR SORDID GAIN

"Sordid gain" refers to self-seeking gain, whether it is power, position, or monetary gain. The practice of financially compensating leaders in the church came about early in the church's development (cf. I Cor. 9:7; Gal. 6:6), but abuse of the privilege arose with it (I Tim. 3:3; 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3; Jude 11) (Jobes, 305). The proper attitude in serving should be in pleasing God, not as a means to get something in return.

NOT LORDING OVER OTHERS

The third qualification echoes the words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 20:25-28:

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

"Instead of domineering lords, they themselves must be models their people can follow. As *spiritual* shepherds they must lead, not drive" (Hiebert).

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 (cf. Prov. 3:34).

In verse 5 Peter tells the younger men to submit to those who are commissioned to shepherd them. Hebrews 13:17 says, "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."

If the Christians had been recently scattered abroad (I Pet. 1:1), then the churches that Peter was addressing may have still been in their infantile stages of growth. If so, these comments suggest that as Christians gathered, they did so with order and structure from the very beginning.

However, though there are leaders and followers, God reminds all believers to clothe themselves with humility, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Likewise, Philippians 2:3-4 tells us: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

The letter ends with three exhortations:

- 1. humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**
- 2. be of sober spirit and on the alert**
- 3. resist the Devil**

5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

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

It should be remembered that this exhortation to "humble ourselves" (v.6) is in the context of "suffering according to the will of God" (4:19). If God's judgment has begun with the household of God (4:17), and if that judgment comes about in the form of persecution, then the proper response is to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, and allow Him to exalt us when the proper time comes. Pride resists God's will and God opposes the proud.

The NIV makes verse 7 into a new sentence, "Cast all your anxiety on Him." But that break obscures the connection in the original Greek. "Casting all your anxiety on Him" is a participial phrase that tells us *how* we are to attain humility. In other words, casting your anxiety on God is what we do in order to humble ourselves; it is part of the process of humbling ourselves.

This word "casting" in verse 7 also occurs in Luke 19:35. At the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the disciples brought a donkey for Jesus to ride upon and it says, ". . . casting their garments on the colt,

they set Jesus on it." The concept is simple. "If you have a garment on and you want an animal to carry it for you, you "cast" the garment on the animal. In this way you don't carry it anymore. It's on the animal not on you. The donkey works for you and lifts your load. God is willing to carry your anxieties the same way a donkey carries your baggage." (Piper)

The blessing of Christianity is that God commands us to let Him work for us. Psalm 55:22 also tells us, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you." Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Likewise, Isaiah 46:4 promises, "Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." As Isaiah 64:4 says, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides thee, who works for those who wait for him." Of all the so-called gods in the world, only the God of the Bible draws near to carry the burdens of His creatures.

The great barrier in putting others first is our concern of who will care for me? The answer is that God Himself cares for you (Grudem, 202). "When it says that He cares, it means He will not stand by and let things develop without His influence. It means He will act. He will work. Not always the way we would. He's God. He sees a thousand connections we don't see. . . Casting your anxiety on God means trusting Him for handling this specific situation. If you believe that He cares (which is what the promise says), and believe that He is God, then your fears will be lifted" (Piper).

Philippians 4:6-7 is also helpful. It says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

As we lay out our troubles before Him, we are in essence casting our cares upon Him. God's peace is described as a peace that transcends all understanding. This could also mean that His peace transcends "all cleverness," "inventiveness," or the attempts we make to find relief from our anxiety through our own logic. In other words, "Human reasoning results in continued doubt and anxiety; it cannot find its way out of a dilemma. God's peace, by contrast, is effective in removing all disquietude" (O'Brien, 497).

This peace, Paul says, will guard our hearts. "To guard" is a military term "used of a detachment of soldiers who stand guard over a city and protect it from attack" (O'Brien, 498). God's peace is like a garrison that keeps guard over the believers' minds and hearts, protecting them from assaults.

Christ is the sphere in which the divine protection will occur: God's peace will stand over the hearts and minds of those who are in Christ Jesus (O'Brien, 498).

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

Spiritual sobriety and alertness are necessary because we have an adversary that is seeking to devour us. “The metaphor is apt, for a prowling lion attacks suddenly, viciously, and often when its unsuspecting victim is engaged in routine activities” (Grudem, 202, 203). Though persecution may come from the unbelieving, the ultimate source is satanic. I John 5:19 tells us that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. In II Timothy 2:26, Paul desires that the unbelieving “may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

Although some may wonder how Satan’s works can be in accordance with God’s purposes, the dynamic is the same as that which took place in the Garden of Eden. There God used Satan’s evil schemes to test man’s obedience and draw out the true nature of man’s faith in the promises of God. Had Adam and Eve been sober-minded and alert, they could have avoided “being bitten.”

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.

Although there are times when we are to flee temptation (2 Tim. 2:22), the final command in Peter is to stand firm. While it is foolish to ignore the devil’s existence, it is also wrong to flee in fear. James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Victory is not automatic (Satan must be resisted), but it is assured if we resist.

Persecution should not be avoided by adopting the mindset of the unbeliever or modifying our behavior to match theirs. Rather, the answer to persecution is simply to stand our ground, and to realize that other believers are facing the same scenarios in life and are forced to suffer for their God-honoring choices as well. There is solidarity of experience among believers.

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.

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

Suffering will happen. It is part of God’s will (1:6; 2:21; 3:9, 14, 17; 4:12-13, 19; 5:1, 10). So Peter concludes by reminding us that God is the source of the grace we need in the midst of suffering and that He has called us to an eternal glory in Christ. This is the realm that really counts. Paul said in Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Through suffering God will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

God has dominion over all, including the suffering that He allows. This knowledge should not make us question the goodness of God, which is the popular response today, but should cause us to praise Him for His rule, knowing that even through our suffering God is glorified.

Throughout his letter Peter has testified that the grace of God is descriptive of our entire life. The help, strength, forgiveness, and all else that we need in this life is a result of grace. Stand in it. Don't abandon it in the midst of the pressures of the world.

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!

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

5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

Babylon is most likely not a reference to the actual city in Mesopotamia which was an obscure place by the first century. Rather, it is representative of the world system, opposed to God. In Peter's day it is a reference to Rome which also figures into prophecy related to the end times (cf. Rev. 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). "She who is . . . chosen together with you" would therefore be a reference to the church in Rome. This also fits other NT evidence that places Peter in Rome when the letter was written (see Grudem, p 34ff).

"A kiss of love" was free from romantic overtones and is called a "holy kiss" by Paul (Ro. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26). Although most feel this is a first century custom, it is also an expression of genuine love which should be expressed among the believing (in whatever way is culturally appropriate).