

10. 1 Peter 5 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

Up to this point, Peter has directed us on how to act in our many Christian relationships; such as, our relationships with the government, with masters and slaves, husbands and wives, other Christians, the word of God, those outside the church, and those who persecute us. In this, the final chapter, Peter addresses the relationship of elders to the church, younger men to the older men, and the enemy, the devil.

The Elders, Shepherds of the Flock

5 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

This passage begins with the phrase, *to the elders among you*, and follows in verse 2 with, *be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care*. These two phrases limit the elder's jurisdiction to the local congregation. The American Standard Version states the latter in 1 Peter 5:2: "Tend the flock of God which is among you." This very wording rules out any broader geographic sphere of influence for the elder, such as modern day presbyteries, synods, council, convention, etc., where elders presumably make rules and extend oversight to multiple congregations. Elders have the oversight of only the congregation under their care.

Each Local Church, Autonomous and Independent

These passages establish the local church as autonomous and independent from every other church. The one church, the body of Christ, has its separate congregations bound together through love, the unity of the spirit, and the bond of peace. Paul wrote in Eph 4:2-6:

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

It is because of this autonomy that Paul appointed elders (plural) in every church in Acts 14:23: "23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust." Paul also instructed Titus to appoint elders in every town in Titus 1:5: "5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."

Elder, Shepherd and Overseer

Verses 1 and 2 also establish that the words *elder*, *shepherd*, and *overseer* refer to the same office. In a synonymous way, these words speak to the character and function of the office. *Elder* speaks to the age of the person so qualified; *shepherd* speaks to the tending and feeding of the flock of God responsibility; and *overseer* speaks to the oversight of the church. The New Testament uses these words interchangeably. For example, Paul called the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:17, "17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church." While instructing these elders, he called them overseers and shepherds in Acts 20:28-29: "28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." In Titus 1:6-7, Paul again used the words, *elder* and *overseer* interchangeably: "6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless. . . "

Elders oversee and tend the flock of God under their care. They must so serve willingly and not of **constraint** (ASV). Elders also serve, as God wants them to. The elders have no authority except that found in the New Testament. Contrasts show the dimensions of the elders' work:

- Not because you must, but because you are willing
- Not for money, but eager to serve
- Not lording over the church, but examples to the church

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Elders, Rewarded with a Crown of Glory

When Christ—the chief shepherd—comes, faithful elders will receive a crown of glory. Twelve times the Revelation depicts elders serving. None is more awe inspiring than Rev 11:16-18 where the elders sit on their thrones before God:

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great –
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

That the elders receive the crown of glory when Christ appears, forever rejects the idea of a second kingdom of Christ on this earth after the Lord appears.

Young Men, Submissive to Those Who Are Older

5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Verses 5 through 7 extol the virtue of humility, encouraging young men to display it to one another. These young men are also to be submissive to those who are older. If we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up. In our troubled world, we may cast our anxiety on Him. The Lord promised that the meek would be blessed in Matt 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Paul admonished the church at Ephesus in Eph 4:2, "2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

The Devil, a Roaring Lion

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

The final warning to these dispersed Christians teaches that they must be self-controlled and alert. Why? Because the devil is prowling around. Peter must have remembered the time with the Lord when the devil got so close to Peter that he became an instrument in tempting the Lord. Mark 8:31-33 records the incident:

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter details the antidote to the poison of the devil:

- Be self-controlled
- Be alert
- Resist him
- Stand firm in the faith.

Paul also describes how Christians may equip themselves to fight the wicked one in Eph 6:11-18

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Final Exhortation, the Theme of Suffering Revisited

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

The rhetorical conclusion to the letter is verse 10. After we have suffered for a little while, God, who called us, will restore us. We will be strong, firm, and steadfast. In this letter, Peter has used the word *suffer*, 7 times; *suffered*, 5 times; and *suffering*, 3 times. The power that we align ourselves with is the power of God, which is the power for ever and ever – literally translated, into the ages of the ages.

Finally, Peter recognizes Silas, Mark, and the church in Babylon.