

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

### HE CARES FOR YOU!

Read 1 Peter 5:1-14

#### **Introduction.**

We are attacked by fear. We are attacked by the adversary. And God is greater and stronger than our attacks, says St. Peter in this concluding portion of his letter. It ends on an upbeat but practical note. He tells us how to face life, how to face our spiritual enemy, how to face suffering, and how to face God.

#### **A call to Elders**

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed” (v1)

Peter will give a word of exhortation to the elders who are among the Christians reading this letter. These elders had special responsibilities that Peter addressed.

The idea of the elder came into church life from Jewish culture (Exodus 3:16, 12:21, and 19:7). The word “elder” simply speaks of the maturity and wisdom that an older person should have, making them qualified for leadership. In its application, it is more about wisdom and maturity than a specific age.

It was the practice of Paul and Barnabas to appoint elders in the churches they had founded (Acts 14:23). There was also the development of the office of pastor, who was essentially a teaching elder (1 Timothy 5:17) who appointed and guided elders and other leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-13, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5-9).

Peter was qualified to speak because he is a fellow elder. Though Peter was clearly the prominent disciple among the twelve, he claimed no special privilege or position, such as being the pope of the early church. Instead, Peter saw himself only as one fellow elder among all the elders in the church. Peter was also qualified to speak because he was a witness of Jesus’ sufferings when he saw Jesus’ torture and perhaps the crucifixion. He was also a partaker of Jesus’ glory, probably referring to when he saw the transfiguration of Jesus.

#### **What Leaders in the Church must do.**

*“Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”* (vv2-4)

In these verses, Peter seemed to remember Jesus’ three-part commission to him in John 21:15-17. In that passage Jesus told Peter to show his love for Jesus by feeding and tending Jesus’ sheep. A spiritual shepherd does his job in two main ways. The first job is to feed the sheep. Jesus emphasized this to Peter in John 21:15-17. Another aspect of the job is to tend the sheep, which means protecting, guiding, nurturing, and caring for the sheep.

The most important “tool” to shepherd the flock of God is a heart like the heart of Jesus, one that is willing to give one’s life for the sheep, and who genuinely cares about and is interested in them (John 10:11-14). For Peter, the job of being a shepherd could also be understood as being an overseer. This word for leadership comes to the church from Greek culture, and it meant someone who watches over, a manager, or a supervisor (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7).

Shepherds should not do their job by compulsion, as if they were being forced into a task that they really hated. Instead, they should serve God and His people willingly, from a heart that loves God's people as a shepherd loves sheep and wants to serve them. Spiritual shepherds should also not do their job for dishonest gain. The gain is dishonest because it was their motive for serving as shepherds. Instead, they should serve eagerly, willing to serve apart from financial compensation.

Peter said shepherds should not do their job as lords, because the sheep do not belong to them. The sheep are entrusted to them. Therefore, shepherds are to serve by being examples, not dictators.

“Nor as being lords” shows that in the mind of Peter, shepherds had significant authority in the early church. If the office of shepherd was so powerless that a shepherd didn't rule and lead, then there was little potential for being lords. Yet because Peter gives this warning, it shows there was the potential for lording over. The sobering fact is that pastors are examples to the flock, whether they intend to be or not. It is interesting to see how a congregation takes on the personality of its pastor in both good ways and bad ways.

### ***The Reward for Leaders in the Church.***

Peter reminded shepherds in the church that they would answer one day to their Chief Shepherd, who will want to know what they did with His flock. It is important for shepherds — pastors — to realize that they lead Jesus' sheep. He is the Shepherd, He is the Overseer (1 Peter 2:25). In this sense, the Christian shepherd doesn't work for the sheep, he works for the Chief Shepherd.

Faithful shepherds are promised a crown of glory, but not like the crown of leaves given to ancient Olympic champions. This crown will not fade away. Crowns are not only for shepherds, but also for everyone who was faithful to Jesus and who did what He called them to do (1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12).

### **Everyone should be Humble and Watchful.**

*“Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (vv5-7)*

Peter began this word of humility to you younger people, in contrast to the elders he had just addressed. But he soon realized that it is of application to all of you. This word to be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility applies to everyone, but perhaps especially to the young. Humility is demonstrated by submission. It is the ability to cheerfully put away our own agenda for God's, even if God's agenda is expressed through another person.

The phrase “be clothed” translates a rare word that referred to a slave putting on an apron before serving, even as Jesus did before washing the disciple's feet (John 13:4).

### **Some marks of humility:**

- The willingness to perform the lowest and littlest services for Jesus' sake.
- Consciousness of our own inability to do anything apart from God.
- The willingness to be ignored of men.
- Not so much self-hating or depreciation as self-forgetfulness and being truly others-centered instead of self-centered.

For “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*”: Peter quoted Proverbs 3:34 to show that humility is essential to our relationship with God. If we want to live in God’s grace (His unmerited favor) then we must lay aside our pride and be humble — not only to Him but also to one another.

The word “Resists” is the verb that vividly pictures God as one who places Himself in battle array against such individuals. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. Pride demands that God bless me in light of what I think I deserve. Grace deals with me on the basis what is in God, not on the basis of anything in me.

### ***Casting all your care upon Him:***

True humility is shown by our ability to cast our care upon God. It is proud presumption to take things into our own worry and care about things that God has promised to take care of (Matthew 6:31-34). If we would heed the command of 1 Peter 5:6 and truly humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we would have far fewer cares to cast upon Him as invited in 1 Peter 5:7. Worries about covetousness, ambition, popularity, all evaporate under the command to humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.

Casting is a rather energetic word. He didn’t say, “Lay all your care upon Him,” because we have to do it more energetically than that. The idea is, “throw it away from you.” The pressures and the burdens of your life are so heavy and difficult that it takes great concentration of effort to put them on Jesus.

### ***God Cares for you.***

At their best moments the religions of ancient Greek culture could imagine a God who was good. Yet they never came to the place where they believed in a God who cared. The God of the Bible — the God who is really there — is a God who cares for you. We often judge the parents by the children. When a child of God is full of worry and fear, doesn’t the world have reason to believe that their Father in heaven doesn’t care for them? Our worry and fear reflect poorly — and unfairly — upon God.

### ***Be watchful for the devil.***

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (vv8-9)*

Peter exhorts us to remain clear-headed (sober) and watchful (vigilant), because Satan has not yet been bound and restrained for 1,000 years as Revelation 20:1-2 says he will be. At the present time, the devil walks about. The devil certainly walks about; he is a finite being and can only be in one place at one time, yet his effort, energy, and associates enable him to extend his influence all over the world and in every arena of life.

For Christians, Satan is a lion who may roar but who has been de-fanged at the cross (Colossians 2:15). Yet the sound of his roar — his deceptive lies — are still potent and he has the power to devour souls and rob Christians of effectiveness.

Psalm 91:3 suggests that Satan may come against us like a fowler, one who captures birds. The fowler is always quiet and secretive, never wanting to reveal his presence. 2 Corinthians 11:14 tells us that Satan can come as an angel of light, appearing glorious, good, and attractive. Yet other times, Peter tells us, Satan comes against us like a roaring lion, loud and full of intimidation.

- He roars through persecution.
- He roars through strong temptation.
- He roars through blasphemies and accusations against God.

### **Resist him, steadfast in the faith:**

The secret of spiritual warfare is simple, steadfast resistance. As we are steadfast in the faith, we resist the devil lies and threats and intimidation. Resist comes from two ancient Greek words: stand and against. Peter tells us to stand against the devil. Satan can be set running by the resistance of the lowliest believer who comes in the authority of what Jesus did on the cross.

### **A prayer for their Spiritual Strengthening.**

*“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (vv10-11)*

Knowing the suffering and danger Christians face, Peter can only conclude with prayer. He asks God to do His work of perfecting, establishing, strengthening, and settling.

These things are God’s work in us and through us. Peter personally knew the futility of trying to face suffering and danger in one’s own strength. His own failure taught him the need for constant reliance on God’s work in our lives, so he prays for his dear Christian friends.

We almost want to ask Peter, “Why did you say that ‘after you have suffered a while?’” But the truth remains. We are only called... to His eternal glory... after you have suffered a while. We wish we were called to His eternal glory on the “no suffering” plan. But God uses suffering to perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us.

The God who can do this great work in our lives is certainly worthy of our praise as Peter puts it ‘*To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*’

### **Conclusion to the Letter.**

*“By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” (vv12-14)*

This portion was probably written by Peter’s own hand, after he (according to the custom of the day) had dictated the bulk of the letter to Silvanus. This man Silvanus was probably the same one known as Silas in many of Paul’s letters.

Peter summed up his message as an exhortation to understand and recognize the true grace of God in which you stand. We must understand not only what God’s grace is, but that grace is our place of present standing before Him.

Who is the “She who is in Babylon” that greets with Peter? This may be the literal city of Babylon (which still existed in Peter’s day), or it may be a symbolic way of referring to either Rome or Jerusalem. These were two cities that in Peter’s day were famous for their wickedness and spiritual rebellion, just like ancient Babylon was. In any regard, this was one church greeting another.

There was of course the literal city of Babylon on the Euphrates. There was also a place known as Babylon in Egypt, and it was a Roman military fortress near the present city of Cairo. Yet many think that Peter meant “Babylon” in a symbolic sense to represent the city of Rome. As a Biblical concept, “Babylon” as the city of this world stands in contrast to “Jerusalem” as the city of God. He may have meant Rome as Babylon as “the center of worldliness.”

**So does Mark my son:** This verse connects Mark with Peter, apparently the same Mark of Acts 12:12, 12:25, and 15:37-39. When the style and perspective of the Gospel of Mark are taken into account, many believe that Peter was Mark's primary source of information for his gospel.

**Greet one another with a kiss of love:** Peter concludes with a command to greet and display God's love to one another, and by pronouncing a blessing of peace. These two things — love for each other and peace — are especially necessary for those who suffer and live in dangerous times.