

Sunday Morning Message

December 6, 2020

1 Peter 5:1 - 7 – *Shepherding God's People Through Seasons of Suffering*

Series - *Experiencing God's Grace in the Midst of Suffering*

Text - 1 Peter 5:1 - 7

Congregational Reading - 1 Peter 5:1 - 5

"1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Peter 5:1-7)

Introduction

We have been taking our time examining this first epistle of Peter, which was originally written to “strangers” in what was known in Bible days as “Asia,” but is today the area within the borders of Turkey. These Christians were called strangers because they were believers who knew that their home was in Heaven, and that they were only sojourning here on the earth for a short time. They were suffering intense persecution, and often were living “on the run” trying to escape from their civil and religious tormenters. This was the time of Emperor Nero, and under his reign Christians were being slaughtered by the thousands.

Peter’s letter was intended to comfort these afflicted saints of the Lord and encourage them to remain faithful, even while they were going through extraordinary trials and great affliction.

We, too, are going through some difficult times. People are suffering; though our trials seem to pale in comparison to what we know happened to these Christians in the first century. However, the times that we are living in are becoming increasingly difficult for believers in an increasingly godless culture; and, unless a national revival is sent from heaven, things will likely only get worse.

Though this epistle specifically addresses the unique difficulties of these persecuted Christians within the Roman Empire in the first century, the Holy Spirit of God intended

that the timeless principles contained within this portion of Scripture be applicable to believers today as we Experience God's Grace in the Midst of Our Own Suffering.

So far in these series of messages from 1 Peter, we have learned:

- We can trust in God's grace in the midst of our suffering (1 Peter 1:1 – 5).
- Our faith can be strengthened through seasons of suffering (1 Peter 1:6 – 12).
- What we can do when we are going through periods of suffering (1 Peter 1:13 – 25).
- We are a purchased possession by the grace of God (1 Peter 2:1 – 12).
- We can follow in Christ's steps by the grace of God (1 Peter 2:11 – 25).
- Maintaining Good Relationships by the Grace of God (1 Peter 3:1 – 12).
- Having a Proper Perspective on Suffering by the Grace of God (1 Peter 3:13 - 22).
- Having the Mind of Christ through Suffering (1 Peter 4:1 – 6).
- Stewarding the Manifold Grace of God (1 Peter 4:7 – 11).
- Glorifying Christ Through Suffering (1 Peter 4:12 – 19).

Transition

As we examine this final chapter in 1 Peter, we will hear the advice given from Peter, one of God's under-shepherds, to the other under-shepherds who were leading these local congregations in Asia Minor. Pastors and church leaders will all want to listen in to this section very carefully, as this information will also be very helpful for us today.

I. A Word to the Under-Shepherds (1 Peter 5:1 – 4)

"1 The elders which are among you I exhort, ... (v. 1a)

Peter addresses this section to “the elders” which were among the saints scattered throughout “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). It is important to point out here something that may seem very obvious to us, but is clearly revealed here within this passage. There was organization with these Christians that Peter was writing to. Though these were scattered believers, there was definitely ecclesiastical structure. These were organized local churches, which had pastors (or elders) and other church leaders.

The word “elders” (Πρεσβυτέρους from πρεσβύτερος – *presbyteros* - Adj.; Acc.; Plu.; Masc.) is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to people who are older, but it also often refers to people who serve in an official capacity within a group, such as in the Jewish Council - the Sanhedrin; or, within a New Testament church. Some preachers would say that the word, “elder,” is synonymous with the word, “pastor.” I believe in this context we could say that it refers to anybody who is in a pastoral capacity; someone who shepherds

God's people. This may be what we would refer to today as a senior pastor, or it could mean one who may be subordinate to the pastor, but is still in pastoral ministry. In a broader sense, it could apply to anyone that ministers to people.

Typically, the Baptist position is that the words pastor (or shepherd), elder, and bishop (1 Timothy 3:1 – 2; Titus 1:7; Philippians 1:1) all refer to different functions of the same office:

According to the Vision Baptist College Bible Doctrines notes:

1. Bishop – Overseer (Duty of the office)
2. Elder – Ruler (Dignity of the office)
3. Pastor – Shepherd (Design of the office)¹

Interestingly, we will see all three of these designations within verses 1 and 2.

Peter wanted to “exhort” (παρακαλῶ from παρακαλέω – *parakaleō* – Verb; Pres.; Act.; Ind.; 1st Per. Sing.) these elders. Exhortation includes encouragement and comfort; strengthening or edification; and sometimes even admonishment. Peter wanted to make sure the church leaders were encouraged, strengthened, and equipped so that they could effectively minister to these persecuted saints.

Practical Note – Pastors and church leaders need older and wiser preachers to encourage them. Illustrate – Charlie Horton; Charles Clark Jr.

Practical Note – It is also very good for pastors and leaders to have encouragement from people within the church as well. The ministry can be very discouraging, and spiritual leaders need all of the support that they can get.

A. Concerning Peter's Qualifications (v. 1)

... who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: (v. 1b)

... who am also an elder - Notice that Peter identified himself with these elders. He does not specifically refer to himself here as an apostle. He did in the first verse of the letter, but here he seems to be humbling himself by emphasizing that he is one of them. Peter was an apostle, and as such was part of a very select group of men; but he was also just a man and a fellow servant with these men that he was addressing in this letter.

... and a witness (μάρτυς – *martys* – Noun; Nom.; Sing.; Masc.) *of the sufferings* (παθημάτων from πάθημα – *pathēma* – Noun; Gen.; Plu.; Nom.) *of Christ*, - This phrase more closely identifies him with the apostles. An apostle had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8). Peter was more than just an observer;

¹ Bill Ramos, “Ecclesiology Class Lecture Notes” *Bible Doctrines I*, Vision Baptist College, September 2017.

he was a partaker of Christ's sufferings. The word witness is the word we get "martyr" from. Someone who dies for the Lord is the ultimate witness for Christ. Peter had already suffered for the Lord, but he would also pay the ultimate sacrifice.

... and also a partaker (κοινωνός – *koinōnos* – Noun; Nom.; Sing.; Masc) *of the glory that shall be revealed*: - Peter had witnessed the glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1 – 8; **2 Peter 1:15 - 18**), and he was confident that he would "partake," of that same glory himself, when his earthly body was resurrected and changed into that glorious new body that the Lord would give him.

Peter personally witnessed the Lord's suffering; and, he also saw the Lord in all His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was also present when Jesus ascended up into Heaven. Peter was confident that the Lord was going to do the same thing for him someday, as well as for these other believers. Yes, they were suffering intense persecution, but someday they, too, would partake of the Lord's glory.

Practical Note – You and I may also have to suffer a little for the cause of Christ down here on the earth, but we also will partake of the glory that shall be revealed in Heaven.

"51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

B. Concerning Pastoral Instructions (vs. 2 – 3)

2 Feed (ποιμάνατε from ποιμαίνω – *poimainō* – Verb – Aor.; Act.; Imp.; 2nd Per.; Plu) *the flock of God which is among you*, (v. 2a) – This speaks of the elder in his shepherding or pastoral role. The root word for feed is the same as for "shepherds" in many passages, and also for "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11. The word "feed" here means more than just distributing food.

The under-shepherd of the flock has many responsibilities, but two are primary:

1. He has to protect the flock

"23 *Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.*" (Proverbs 27:23)

Protecting the flock means that they must be kept from harm; separating them from anything that will hurt them.

2. He has to provide for the flock

"28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους from ἐπίσκοπος – episkopos – Bishop), to feed (ποιμαίνειν from ποιμαίνω – poimainō – pastor or shepherd) the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*" (Acts 20:28-29)

Note – In these verses as well we see the three duties within the pastorate dealt with: shepherding, overseeing, and ruling. Paul was speaking to the “elders” of the church at Ephesus 20:17).

For the spiritual flock – the local church - the under-shepherd is responsible to feed the flock with the Word of God. The Bible has all of the spiritual nutrients that are needed to produce healthy Christians. That is why a good New Testament church will always be unapologetically Bible heavy. That is also why the pastor needs to spend much of his time in the study, preparing spiritual meals for his people.

... taking the oversight (ἐπισκοποῦντες from ἐπισκοπέω – episkopeō) *thereof*, (v. 2b) – The word, “oversight” here is the verb form of the word for Bishop (1 Timothy 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25). It means to look after diligently; to care for; to inspect. The Bible states that the pastor must give an account to the Lord for his diligence in caring for the flock (Hebrews 13:17).

... not by constraint, (ἀναγκαστῶς from ἀναγκαστῶς – anagkastōs – Adverb) *but willingly*; (ἐκουσίως from ἐκουσίως – ekousiōs – Adverb - v. 2c)

Ministry is not something you should be forced to do. It needs to be something you want to do; it is voluntary. A minister is called by God and God will work in you both to will and do his good pleasure (Phil 2:13). But, we should certainly not be serving God because we feel constrained to do it. We do not have to serve God; we get to serve God. It is a wonderful privilege.

"1 *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*" (1 Timothy 3:1)

If there is any compulsion in the ministry, it ought to be from within; from the Lord.

The prophet Jeremiah once tried to quit his ministry to God's people:

"9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jeremiah 20:9)

... not for filthy lucre, (αἰσχροκερδῶς – aischrokerdōs – Adverb) but of a ready mind; (προθύμως – prothymōs – Adverb - v. 2d)

Jesus used the word, "hireling," for somebody who just in it for the money:

"11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." (John 10:11-13)

The ministry is not a job; it is a calling. The minister should be willing to do what he does for God's people without any compensation at all. The church, on the other hand, should do everything in its power to supply the needs of those that minister to them.

"11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Corinthians 9:11)

3 Neither as being lords over (κατακυριεύοντες from κατακυριεύω – katakyrieuō – Verb – Pres.; Act.; Part.; Nom.; Plu.; Masc) God's heritage, (v. 3a)

This implies leadership by manipulation and intimidation². Pastors and spiritual leaders are not to be dictators or masters over the people.

... but being ensamples (τύποι from τύπος – typos – Noun – Nom.; Plu.; Masc.) to the flock. (v. 3b)

The word example is the same word for type, picture, or image. We are to model Christ before the people. It is not: "do as I say, and not as I do." We are to paint a picture of Christlikeness in our lives, and encourage people to follow us. Paul said:

"1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

"17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Philippians 3:17)

C. Concerning Prospective Commendation (v. 4)

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (v. 4)

² John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1948.

Rewards in the Bible are often referred to as crowns. The Bible speaks specifically of five "crowns" that are awarded to faithful believers:

1. Striver's Crown / Incorruptible Crown (I Corinthians 9:24, 25)

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

2. Soulwinner's Crown / Crown of Rejoicing (I Thessalonians 2:19; II Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 4:1; Luke 15:7, 10)

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19)

3. Soldier's Crown / Crown of Righteousness (II Timothy 4:6-8)

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

4. Sufferer's Crown / Crown of Life (James. 1:12; Revelation 2:10)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James 1:12)

5. Shepherd's Crown / Crown of Glory (I Peter 5:4)

We sometimes refer to this as the Pastor's Crown. Peter states that these faithful elders would be handsomely rewarded by the Lord for any suffering or sacrifice that they are called upon to endure here on the earth.

Almost everything that people get so focused on while here on the earth is merely temporary. But Heaven is eternal. Those rewards that the Lord gives us are eternal. Nobody can take them from us; The government cannot take them from us; they are tax free.

II. A Word to the Sheep (1 Peter 5:5 – 7)

"5 Likewise, ye younger, (νεώτεροι from νέος – neos – Adj.; Nom.; Plu.; Masc.; Comparative Degree - v. 5a)

I find it very interesting that Peter uses the word, "elder" in reference to people who minister for the Lord, though the word can be used to describe a person who is older in age; and, there are many older people who are involved in the ministry work.

However, the word “younger” here clearly indicates someone who is younger in age; or youthful. The idea here likely has to do with someone who is spiritually younger. Those that are newly saved, need to learn from their spiritual elders.

A. Concerning Submission (vs. 5 – 6)

... *submit* (ὑποτάγητε from ὑποτάσσω – *hypotassō* – Verb – 2nd Aor.; Pas.; Imp.; 2nd Per.; Plu.) *yourselves unto the elder.* (v. 5b)

Submission is such a difficult thing for most of us. We are by nature strong-willed and selfish. We want our way, and it isn't easy to yield to the wishes of somebody else. I guess, the thing that helps me with this at times is the fact that my submission to any human is ultimately submission to the Lord.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Hebrews 13:7)

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17)

"Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you."
(Hebrews 13:24)

Yea, all of you be subject (ὑποτασσόμενοι from ὑποτάσσω – *hypotassō* – Verb – Pres.; Pas.; Part.; Nom.; Plu.; Masc.) *one to another,* (v. 5c)

We are all to be submissive to each other.

Illustrate – Dennis Corle – My wife submits to me because most of the time I submit to her.

... *and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:* (vs. 5d – 6)

Notice the word, “humble,” or “humility” are used three times here in these two verses, and notice also the word, “pride.” James references this as well:

"6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:6)

The original quote seems to be from Proverbs:

"34 Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." (Proverbs 3:34)

B. Concerning Surrender (v. 7)

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (v. 7)

Ultimately, it is God who will care for you. He uses people to do it sometimes, but it is God that we must put our trust in. Sometimes, people get too dependent on other people to care for them.

Conclusion

In times of persecution and suffering, God's people need strong, but Christlike leadership. These first century church leaders were men (and women) who exemplified faithfulness while being under intense pressure. They stayed by the stuff, and remained faithful unto death. They were not telling people one thing and doing another. Both Peter and his wife were crucified for their Lord.

These are very convicting passages for me as a pastor. The ministry is a wonderful privilege, but it is also an awesome responsibility. It is my prayer that I will be able to faithfully serve the Lord through the difficult days that lay ahead. How about you? Many of you are spiritual leaders. Are you being the faithful example that you need to be for the Lord? Are you painting a picture of Christ to the struggling believers that God has placed in your care.

Illustration – Pastor Rick Wedemeyer was a wonderful example to me of what Peter was teaching here to these elders. He allowed me to get close to him, and at that vantage point I could clearly see Christ's life being lived through him. He was very patient with me as he mentored and disciplined me. He was always broke financially, but he would give anybody that needed it the shirt right off of his back. And yet, he was by far one of the richest men I ever knew. I saw him sacrifice time and time again for the Lord; and in his later years, I watched him suffer physically; but never once did I hear him complain. He was faithful right up to the time the Lord took him home.

He is enjoying his reward in Heaven right now, and I am looking forward to seeing him someday, maybe very soon. I want to be the kind of minister to you that Pastor Rick was to me. I want to be found faithful when the Lord comes back for me. It is my desire to be a faithful under-shepherd to God's people, especially through this season of suffering. How about you?