

Honorable Duty within the Church

1 Peter 5: 1-5

Peter had shared much with the church regarding their Christian lives among the world. They were challenged to build their lives upon Christ, the Corner Stone. Their lives were to be lived in light of their relationship with Christ, abiding faithful, even in the midst of opposition and suffering. The Lord had provided the example believers were to follow.

As Peter sought to bring his first letter to a close, he then addressed the Christian life as it relates to the church – being in submission to the Lord, following the guidance of the pastor, and living in humility and service to one another. Although this passage was written thousands of years ago, we are part of the same body of Christ. The principles and expectations Peter had for the church then remain relevant for the church today. As believers, we too are obligated to abide by the biblical instruction Peter left for the church.

As we examine the [directives](#) Peter gave believers, I want to consider: [Honorable Duty within the Church](#).

I. The Declaration of Peter (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](#). This statement prefaced the exhortation he would give to the elders within the churches. Through this statement, Peter revealed truth about himself. Consider:

A. His Position (1) – As Peter addressed the elders, he reminded them that he too was an elder within the church. While this word had often been used to refer to those who were senior by age, by this time it had become accepted as a title referring to the pastor or bishop of the local church. Scholars agree Peter was not merely referring to senior believers, but addressing those who held the position of pastor within the local church.

B. His Passion (1) – Peter was not only an elder, he was also a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He had walked with the Lord as a disciple of His. Peter was there as Jesus faced a mock trial by the Sanhedrin. He was an eyewitness to the abuse and suffering Jesus endured in order to provide our redemption from sin. The life and provision of Christ were not mere fables or legends. Peter knew the Lord had suffered and died upon the cross to provide salvation to those who were bound in sin, separated and condemned before God. He was now committed to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those he encountered. He was convinced that Jesus was the Christ, and man's hope of salvation was found in Christ alone.

C. His Patience (1) – *and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*. Peter was confident in his faith and the provision of all who come to Christ in salvation. While they faced great opposition and often horrific persecution for their association with Christ and the Gospel, Peter knew there was much more ahead for the believer. Those who are in Christ will also be partakers of the glory that one day will be revealed as we stand before the one who offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. While death is certain here upon the earth, eternal life beyond the grave is certain by faith in Christ. Such hope and assurance allowed Peter to patiently endure the difficulties he endured while serving the Lord.

II. The Exhortation to Pastors (2-4) – Following a brief word about himself, Peter then addressed those who served in pastoral roles within the church. He spoke of:

A. Their Ministry (2a) – *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*. Peter mentioned the primary responsibility of pastoral ministry. First, they were called and expected to feed the flock of God. Peter was writing to those who had been called to serve as the under-shepherd for the people of God. He was responsible to feed the people. Peter was not referring to the physical act of feeding the flock, but spiritually feeding them – faithfully preaching and teaching the Word. He was also responsible for faithfully tending and caring for the body of Christ. They were expected to carry out the role of a traditional shepherd, feeding the sheep and tending to the needs of the flock.

- The pastor was also responsible for leading the flock by taking the oversight thereof. He is responsible for managing the flock. This involves leading them toward greener pastures, away from harm, while keeping a watchful eye for anything that might hinder or harm the flock. His careful eye will notice sheep who are sick, hurt, or have strayed from the flock.

B. Their Motivation (2b) – *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*. Peter then revealed what should motivate the pastor as he oversees the flock. He watches over them not out of compulsion, (feeling as if he has no choice,) but out of a willing and compassionate heart for their well-being. He is passionate about caring for the church, being delighted in his work rather than viewing it with dread and disdain. The pastor does not serve merely for the monetary compensation, but because of his calling and desire to serve the Lord and the church faithfully.

C. Their Meekness (3) – *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*. A godly pastor should be a man of meekness, viewing his work as a privilege to serve the Lord by

ministering to the church. He does not behave as a dictator to the church, demanding his wishes and desires be fulfilled. A wise shepherd knows that sheep can be easily led while the shepherd is out front, but it is quite difficult to drive them from behind. Peter knew this and emphasized this truth. The pastor was not be one who sought to drive the sheep in the direction he desired, but compassionately lead the sheep by being a godly example before them.

D. Their Compensation (4) – *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* Peter knew pastoral ministry could be difficult at times, just like any effort to serve the Lord in the midst of a fallen world. He also knew those who were genuinely called of God, possessing a love for the church, were not serving for monetary gain. There would be seasons of doubt and discouragement, times of wondering if their efforts were even making a difference. Some might question the overall value of their ministry efforts. Peter wanted to encourage the pastors that their compensation would not necessarily come in this life; but for those who had been faithful, their reward would come as they stood before Christ.

III. The Expectation for Believers (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.* Here Peter addressed the believers within the church regarding what was expected of them. He spoke of:

A. Their Submission (5a) – *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.* Believers were expected to submit themselves unto the leadership of the elders within the church. The word submit is a military term that has the idea of “*lining up under those in charge.*” The church would prosper when she followed the leadership of those whom the Lord had provided to lead and shepherd the flock. This doesn’t imply they should never think for themselves, or submit to false doctrine, or follow a pastor leading in a way that is contrary to Scripture. But, if the pastor is faithfully preaching the Word, seeking the Lord to guide his efforts, the church should be willing to follow the leadership of the pastor God has provided them.

B. Their Humility (5b) – *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.* Peter exhorted the church to be subject one to another. This is the same word translated submit in the previous statement. Peter knew the church must function as a complete body if she was to be effective and prosper. Each needed to be mindful of the needs and position of others. Those in positions of leadership were to be respected and encouraged, rather than scorned and discouraged. The church was greater than any one individual, and all needed to be mindful of the needs of the entire body, not individual preferences.

- They were to clothe themselves in humility. *The phrase "be clothed"...means to gird oneself with an apron. It is the picture of what Jesus did in the upper room when He girded Himself with an apron and assumed the role of a servant and washed the feet of the disciples. Jesus, the Son of God and Sovereign Majesty of the universe, actually clothed Himself with the apron of humility and served the disciples.* ⁱ John 13:13-15 – *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.* ^[14] *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.* ^[15] *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

C. Their Assurance (5c) – *for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* Peter declared that God will resist those who are proud, seeking self-glory and promotion. He will literally oppose and work against those who are proud. On the other hand, He gives grace to the humble. He shows favor to those who serve in humility – being submissive to others and seeking the good of the entire body.

- I have experienced the grace of God many times. I desire to receive all the grace He will provide. It would not be wise to develop a proud heart before the Lord, knowing He will oppose and work against such behavior and attitudes. We are assured of His grace if we practice humility, but we can also expect His chastening if we are proud.

Conclusion: This has been a simple and yet informative passage. It reveals the means by which we serve the Lord honorably within the church. I want to be pleasing to the Lord. I trust you do as well. If there are needs, especially regarding salvation, come to the Lord today!

ⁱ Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2 & 3 John; Jude.