

Text: 1 Peter 5:1-14

Instructions for Elders/Pastors/Overseers

1Therefore, 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, 2shepherd 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; 3nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Peter opens the last chapter of this letter by giving instruction and encouragement to elders/pastors/overseers in the churches. Notice that he identifies himself as their “fellow,” a title not likely to be assumed by one claiming the supreme ecclesiastical power of the Pope. Roman Catholics nevertheless believe Peter to have had this title and power. While Peter does invoke his credibility as an apostle and witness of Christ’s ministry, he writes as merely a fellow servant passing wisdom to fellow believers. His instructions here parallel those given by Paul to Titus regarding elders.

5For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. 10For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. 12One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, 14not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. 15To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:5-16)

Paul here both lists the characteristics that identify a worthy and acceptable elder, and also notes those of the false teachers that had already appeared at that time. Given the importance, holiness, and sobriety of God’s Word, the writers of the New Testament, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, set high standards for those that would teach the Word. James even discourages the majority of believers from becoming teachers, noting that those that teach the Word will be judged harshly if it is mishandled.

1Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

The danger of false teaching lies not only in the lusts of corrupt teachers, but also in the sinful desires of congregations. Paul warned Timothy that sinful people would find preachers that will tell them what they want to hear, rather than the Truth of God’s Word. He nevertheless reiterates that those who persevere in preaching the true Word of God will receive their due reward.

1I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

Submission to Elders/Pastors/Overseers

5You 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. 6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, (1 Peter 5:5-6)

The command for Christians to be humble is a consistent theme of the New Testament. In this case, we are commanded to humbly subject ourselves to those in spiritual authority above us. If our elders/pastors/overseers meet the qualifications discussed a moment ago, we should have no difficulty following their directives. Although directed primarily at obedience to civil authorities, the following passage can also apply to obeying spiritual authorities.

1Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (Titus 3:1-2)

Jesus constantly exhorted His followers to be humble, noting that it is the humble that will be exalted in the end.

11"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11)

Jesus Himself is our example in this. He had more reason to be proud than any person that has ever walked the face of the earth, yet He lived His earthly life as a humble Servant, setting a tremendous example for us to follow.

5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Do Not Worry!

7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

How often are we guilty of worrying about this or that! Granted, there are many legitimate concerns encountered in life, but we have God's promise that, as believers, things will work out for our good and His glory. We are commanded to cast our anxiety on Him; therefore, to wallow in worry and fear is sinful, disobedient faithlessness.

28And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (Romans 8:28-32)

Christians at that time had much about which to worry. Persecution was a fact of life for many believers at that time, even as it is today. If we live godly lives, we should expect to endure some degree of difficulty for that.

12Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)

Even in this, though, we are not to worry, because God has promised even to speak through us when we are persecuted for His sake and commanded to defend the faith.

11"When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13"You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Mark 13:11-13)

We are also not to worry about our temporal, physical needs (not *wants*), as God has promised to provide those as well.

19And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

13Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." 16And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17"And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18"Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and

build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" 20'"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21'"So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'" 22'And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. 23'"For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24'"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25'"And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? 26'"If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? 27'"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 28'"But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith! 29'"And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. 30'"For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31'"But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. 32'"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33'"Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34'"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:13-34)

Finally, no matter what, we have the promise that God's love through Jesus Christ abides with us no matter what the circumstances. He loves us, He cares for us, He provides our needs. Let go of your worry and rest in Him!

33Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36Just as it is written,

"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;

WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:33-39)

28"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Our Adversary: The Devil

8Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

As we noted previously, all true Christians will suffer persecution. Remember, too, that those not living in subjection to Christ are—knowingly or unknowingly—living in subjection to Satan. The Devil himself is our adversary, and we must resist him. James tells us how to do this:

7Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God and He will draw near to you Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. (James 4:7-10)

If we are to successfully resist the Devil, we must live in humble submission to God. We do *not* have the power to defeat Satan on our own—only God possesses this power. He has promised to make that power available to us only through submission to Him. Remember: the Bible at no point makes absolute self-will an option for us. We will live in subjection to Christ as Lord, or in subjection to Satan and to the sinful nature. We all must subject ourselves to God!

In the book of Ephesians, Paul also notes that our enemies are not evil people so much as the demonic influences moving about in the world. He instructs us to **Put on the full armor of God** to protect ourselves against these enemies.

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:10-18)

The armor of God has only one offensive weapon, **the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.** Jesus demonstrated how to effectively wield that sword in resisting temptation.

1Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" 5Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"

7Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" 8Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." 10Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" 11Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him. (Matthew 4:1-11)

Suffering Builds and Establishes Faith

10After 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. 11To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:10-11)

Once again, we see here the mention of suffering. Despite what many “ear-tickling” preachers say, God has not promised us a life of ease and wealth, but a life of suffering and difficulty. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that God uses this suffering to build our faith.

2Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

As we approach the last days, persecution will increase, as will the proliferation of false teachers and false christs. Again, we have this promise: **the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.** That principle is also taught in the Parable of the Sower, in which Jesus identifies three groups of individuals that make a profession of faith in Christ, yet only one of the three groups consists of true believers. We cannot look to a prayer, or a decision card, or a baptism, or any other past event as evidence of salvation—there are plenty of folks in Hell that did all of those things. We are instead called to persevere in the faith, constantly examining ourselves to see if our faith is real—the kind that saves.

3As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5"For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6" You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7" For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8" But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9" Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10" At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11" Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12" Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13" But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14" This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:3-14)

13And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? 14" The sower sows the word. 15" These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16" In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown

on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18"And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20"And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (Mark 4:13-20)

5Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

We are called to persevere in the faith—and the reward for doing so is tremendous!

51Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **52**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53**For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54**But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. **55**"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" **56**The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; **57**but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **58**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

Examine yourselves. Make sure Christ Jesus really is your Lord—your Master—and your Savior. Believers will have a great reward; unbelievers—and false believers—can look forward only to an eternity of suffering in Hell.

Concluding Remarks

*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! *13*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. *14*Greet one another with a kiss of love Peace be to you all who are in Christ. (1 Peter 5:12-14)

Here we have a typical conclusion, with greetings of various kinds. Peter instructs his readers to receive Silvanus (Silas) as they would receive Peter himself. The reference to Babylon is often interpreted as a euphemism for Rome, but commentators disagree on this. After all, Peter was “the apostle to the Jews,” and many Jews remained in Mesopotamia even after the return to Judea led by Ezra and Nehemiah, so it would make sense for him to visit and preach there. In any case, the exhortation to *stand firm* in God’s grace is one that all of us should hear and eagerly follow.

Epilogue: Psalm 37

One commentary that I read cross-referenced 1 Peter 5 with Psalm 37. I want to close by reading this Psalm, as it reiterates the exhortations and promises we have studied today.

1Do not fret because of evildoers,
 Be not envious toward wrongdoers.
2For they will wither quickly like the grass
 And fade like the green herb.
3Trust in the LORD and do good;
 Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.
4Delight yourself in the LORD;
 And He will give you the desires of your heart.
5Commit your way to the LORD,
 Trust also in Him, and He will do it.
6He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
 And your judgment as the noonday.
7Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
 Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
 Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.
8Cease from anger and forsake wrath;
 Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.
9For evildoers will be cut off,
 But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.

- 10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;
And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be there.
- 11 But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
- 12 The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
- 13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.
- 14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.
- 15 Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.
- 16 Better is the little of the righteous
Than the abundance of many wicked.
- 17 For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the LORD sustains the righteous.
- 18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
And their inheritance will be forever.
- 19 They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,
And in the days of famine they will have abundance.
- 20 But the wicked will perish;
And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,
They vanish--like smoke they vanish away.
- 21 The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives.
- 22 For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.
- 23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.
- 24 When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.
- 25 I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.
- 26 All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.
- 27 Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.
- 28 For the LORD loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.
- 29 The righteous will inherit the land
And dwell in it forever.
- 30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice.
- 31 The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip.
- 32 The wicked spies upon the righteous
And seeks to kill him.
- 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.
- 34 Wait for the LORD and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.
- 35 I have seen a wicked, violent man
Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.
- 36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;
I sought for him, but he could not be found.
- 37 Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;
For the man of peace will have a posterity.

38But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;

The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.

39But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;

He is their strength in time of trouble.

40The LORD helps them and delivers them;

He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,

Because they take refuge in Him. (Psalm 37:1-40)