

CHAPTER 5

In which the apostle gives particular directions, first to the elders, how to behave themselves towards their flock (v. 1-4); then to the younger, to be obedient and humble, and to cast their care upon God (v. 5-7). He then exhorts all to sobriety, watchfulness against temptations, and stedfastness in the faith, praying earnestly for them; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn doxology, mutual salutations, and his apostolical benediction.

~~1~~ 1 PETER 5:1-4

ADVICE TO ELDERS

Here we may observe,

I. The persons to whom this exhortation is given — to the presbyters, pastors, and spiritual guides of the church, elders by office, rather than by age, ministers of those churches to whom he wrote this epistle.

II. The person who gives this exhortation — the apostle Peter: *I exhort*; and, to give force to this exhortation, he tells them he was their brother-presbyter or fellow-elder, and so puts nothing upon them but what he was ready to perform himself. He was also *a witness of the sufferings of Christ*, being with him in the garden, attending him to the palace of the high-priest, and very likely being a spectator of his suffering upon the cross, at a distance among the crowd, ~~Acts~~ Acts 3:15. He adds that he was also *a partaker of the glory* that was in some degree revealed at the transfiguration (~~Matthew~~ Matthew 17:1-3), and shall be completely enjoyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Learn,

- 1.** Those whose office it is to teach others ought carefully to study their own duty, as well as teach the people theirs.
- 2.** How different the spirit and behaviour of Peter were from that of his pretended successors! He does not command and domineer, but exhort. He does not claim sovereignty over all pastors and churches, nor style himself

prince of the apostles, vicar of Christ, or head of the church, but values himself upon being an elder. All the apostles were elders, though every elder was not an apostle.

3. It was the peculiar honour of Peter, and a few more, to be the witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true Christians to be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

III. The pastor's duty described, and the manner in which that duty ought to be performed. The pastoral duty is three-fold: —

1. *To feed the flock*, by preaching to them the sincere word of God, and ruling them according to such directions and discipline as the word of God prescribes, both which are implied in this expression, *Feed the flock*.

2. The pastors of the church must *take the oversight thereof*. The elders are exhorted to do the office of bishops (as the word signifies), by personal care and vigilance over all the flock committed to their charge.

3. They must be *examples to the flock*, and practise the holiness, self-denial, mortification, and all other Christian duties, which they preach and recommend to their people. These duties must be performed, *not by constraint*, not because you must do them, not from compulsion of the civil power, or the constraint of fear or shame, but from a willing mind that takes pleasure in the work: *not for filthy lucre*, or any emoluments and profits attending the place where you reside, or any perquisite belonging to the office, *but of a ready mind*, regarding the flock more than the fleece, sincerely and cheerfully endeavouring to serve the church of God; *neither as being lords over God's heritage*, tyrannizing over them by compulsion and coercive force, or imposing unscriptural and human inventions upon them instead of necessary duty, ^{<4025>}Matthew 20:25, 26; ^{<4024>}2 Corinthians 1:24. Learn,

(1.) The eminent dignity of the church of God, and all the true members of it. These poor, dispersed, suffering Christians were the flock of God. The rest of the world is a brutal herd. These are an orderly flock, redeemed to God by the great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion one with another, *according to the will of God*. They are also dignified with the title of God's *heritage* or *clergy*, his peculiar lot, chosen out of the common multitude for his own people, to enjoy his special favour and to do him

special service. The word is never restricted in the New Testament to the ministers of religion.

(2.) The pastors of the church ought to consider their people as *the flock of God, as God's heritage*, and treat them accordingly. They are not theirs, to be lorded over at pleasure; but they are God's people, and should be treated with love, meekness, and tenderness, for the sake of him to whom they belong.

(3.) Those ministers who are either driven to the work by necessity or drawn to it by filthy lucre can never perform their duty as they ought, because they do not do it willingly, and with a ready mind.

(4.) The best way a minister can take to engage the respect of a people is to discharge his own duty among them in the best manner that he can, and to be a constant example to them of all that is good.

IV. In opposition to that filthy lucre which many propose to themselves as their principal motive in undertaking and discharging the pastoral office, the apostle sets before them the crown of glory designed by the great shepherd, Jesus Christ, for all his faithful ministers. Learn,

1. Jesus Christ is *the chief shepherd* of the whole flock and heritage of God. He bought them, and rules them; he defends and saves them for ever. He is also the chief shepherd over all inferior shepherds; they derive their authority from him, act in his name, and are accountable to him at last.

2. This chief shepherd will appear, to judge all ministers and under-shepherds, to call them to account, whether they have faithfully discharged their duty both publicly and privately according to the foregoing directions.

3. Those that are found to have done their duty shall have what is infinitely better than temporal gain; they shall receive from the grand shepherd a high degree of everlasting glory, *a crown of glory that fadeth not away*.

1 PETER 5:5-7

HUMILITY RECOMMENDED

Having settled and explained the duty of the pastors or spiritual guides of the church, the apostle comes now to instruct the flock,

I. How to behave themselves to their ministers and to one another. He calls them *the younger*, as being generally younger than their grave pastors, and to put them in mind of their inferiority, the term younger being used by our Saviour to signify an inferior, ^{<4226>}Luke 22:26. He exhorts those that are younger and inferior to *submit themselves to the elder*, to give due respect and reverence to their persons, and to yield to their admonitions, reproof, and authority, enjoining and commanding what the word of God requires, ^{<5837>}Hebrews 13:17. As to one another, the rule is that they should all *be subject one to another*, so far as to receive the reproofs and counsels one of another, and be ready to *bear one another's burdens*, and perform all the offices of friendship and charity one to another; and particular persons should submit to the directions of the whole society, ^{<4021>}Ephesians 5:21.; ^{<5156>}James 5:16. These duties of submission to superiors in age or office, and subjection to one another, being contrary to the proud nature and selfish interests of men, he advises them to *be clothed with humility*. "Let your minds, behaviour, garb, and whole frame, be adorned with humility, as the most beautiful habit you can wear; this will render obedience and duty easy and pleasant; but, if you be disobedient and proud, God will set himself to oppose and crush you; for *he resisteth the proud*, when he *giveth grace to the humble*." Observe,

- 1.** Humility is the great preserver of peace and order in all Christian churches and societies, consequently pride is the great disturber of them, and the cause of most dissensions and breaches in the church.
- 2.** There is a mutual opposition between God and the proud, so the word signifies; they war against him, and he scorns them; *he resisteth the proud*, because they are like the devil, enemies to himself and to his kingdom among men, ^{<2031>}Proverbs 3:34.
- 3.** Where God giveth grace to be humble, he will give more grace, more wisdom, faith, holiness, and humility. Hence the apostle adds: *Humble*

yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, v. 6. “Since God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, therefore humble yourselves, not only one to another, but to the great God, whose judgments are coming upon the world, and must begin at the house of God (~~QUAT~~ 1 Peter 4:17); his hand is almighty, and can easily pull you down if you be proud, or exalt you if you be humble; and it will certainly do it, either in this life, if he sees it best for you, or at the day of general retribution.” Learn,

(1.) The consideration of the omnipotent hand of God should make us humble and submissive to him in all that he brings upon us.

(2.) Humbling ourselves to God under his hand is the next way to deliverance and exaltation; patience under his chastisements, and submission to his pleasure, repentance, prayer, and hope in his mercy, will engage his help and release in due time, ~~SORT~~ James 4:7, 10.

II. The apostle, knowing that these Christians were already under very hard circumstances, rightly supposes that what he had foretold of greater hardships yet a coming might excite in them abundance of care and fear about the event of these difficulties, what the issue of them would be to themselves, their families, and the church of God; foreseeing this anxious care would be a heavy burden, and a sore temptation, he gives them the best advice, and supports it with a strong argument. His advice is to *cast all their care, or all care of themselves, upon God*. “Throw your cares, which are so cutting and distracting, which wound your souls and pierce your hearts, upon the wise and gracious providence of God; trust in him with a firm composed mind, *for he careth for you*. He is willing to release you of your care, and take the care of you upon himself. He will either avert what you fear, or support you under it. He will order all events to you so as shall convince you of his paternal love and tenderness towards you; and all shall be so ordered that no hurt, but good, shall come unto you,” ~~HEB~~ Matthew 6:25; ~~EMIL~~ Psalm 84:11; ~~HEB~~ Romans 8:28. Learn,

1. The best of Christians are apt to labour under the burden of anxious and excessive care; the apostle calls it, *all your care*, intimating that the cares of Christians are various and of more sorts than one: personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, cares for the future, cares for themselves, for others, and for the church.

2. The cares even of good people are very burdensome, and too often very sinful; when they arise from unbelief and diffidence, when they torture and distract the mind, unfit us for the duties of our place and hinder our delightful service of God, they are very criminal.

3. The best remedy against immoderate care is to *cast our care upon God*, and resign every event to the wise and gracious determination. A firm belief of the rectitude of the divine will and counsels calms the spirit of man. *We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done,* ~~4214~~ Acts 21:14.

~~4088~~ 1 PETER 5:8-9

SOBRIETY AND VIGILANCE RECOMMENDED

Here the apostle does three things: —

I. He shows them their danger from an enemy more cruel and restless than even the worst of men, whom he describes,

1. By his characters and names.

(1.) He is an adversary: “*That adversary of yours*; not a common adversary, but an enemy that impleads you, and litigates against you in your grand depending cause, and aims at your very souls.”

(2.) *The devil, the grand accuser of all the brethren*; this title is derived from a word which signifies to strike through, or to stab. He would strike malignity into our natures and poison into our souls. If he could have struck these people with passion and murmuring in their sufferings, perhaps he might have drawn them to apostasy and ruin.

(3.) He is *a roaring lion*, hungry, fierce, strong, and cruel, the fierce and greedy pursuer of souls.

2. By his business: *He walks about, seeking whom he may devour*; his whole design is to devour and destroy souls. To this end he is unwearied and restless in his malicious endeavours; for he always, night and day, goes about studying and contriving whom he may ensnare to their eternal ruin.

II. Hence he infers that it is their duty,

1. To *be sober*, and to govern both the outward and the inward man by the rules of temperance, modesty, and mortification.

2. To *be vigilant*; not secure or careless, but rather suspicious of constant danger from this spiritual enemy, and, under that apprehension, to be watchful and diligent to prevent his designs and save our souls.

3. To resist him *stedfast in the faith*. It was the faith of these people that Satan aimed at; if he could overturn their faith, and draw them into apostasy, then he knew he should gain his point, and ruin their souls; therefore, to destroy their faith, he raises bitter persecutions, and sets the grand potentates of the world against them. This strong trial and temptation they must resist, by being well-grounded, resolute, and stedfast in the faith: to encourage them to this,

III. He tells them that their care was not singular, for they knew that the like afflictions befel their brethren in all parts of the world, and that all the people of God were their fellow-soldiers in this warfare. Learn,

1. All the great persecutions that ever were in the world were raised, spirited up, and conducted, by the devil; he is the grand persecutor, as well as *the deceiver and accuser, of the brethren*; men are his willing spiteful instruments, but he is the chief adversary that wars against Christ and his people, ^{<0085}Genesis 3:15; ^{<622}Revelation 12:12.

2. The design of Satan in raising persecutions against the faithful servants of God is to bring them to apostasy, by reason of their sufferings, and so to destroy their souls.

3. Sobriety and watchfulness are necessary virtues at all times, but especially in times of suffering and persecution. “You must moderate your affection to worldly things, or else Satan will soon overcome you.”

4. “If you would overcome Satan, as a tempter, an accuser, or a persecutor, you must resist him stedfast in the faith; if your faith give way, you are gone; therefore, *above all, take the shield of faith*,” ^{<0186}Ephesians 6:16.

5. The consideration of what others suffer is proper to encourage us to bear our own share in any affliction: *The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren*.

1 PETER 5:10-14

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER

We come now to the conclusion of this epistle, which,

I. The apostle begins with a most weighty prayer, which he addresses to God as *the God of all grace*, the author and finisher of every heavenly gift and quality, acknowledging, on their behalf, that God had already called them to be partakers of that eternal glory, which, being his own, he had promised and settled upon them, through the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ. Observe,

1. What he prays for on their account; not that they might be excused from sufferings, but that their sufferings might be moderate and short, and, *after they had suffered awhile*, that God would restore them to a settled and peaceable condition, and perfect his work in them — that he would establish them against wavering, either in faith or duty, that he would strengthen those who were weak, and settle them upon Christ the foundation, so firmly that their union with him might be indissoluble and everlasting. Learn,

(1.) All grace is from God; it is he who restrains, converts, comforts, and saves men by his grace.

(2.) All who are called into a state of grace are called to partake of eternal glory and happiness.

(3.) Those who are called to be heirs of eternal life through Jesus Christ must, nevertheless, suffer in this world, but their sufferings will be but for a little while.

(4.) The perfecting, establishing, strengthening, and settling, of good people in grace, and their perseverance therein, is so difficult a work, that only the God of all grace can accomplish it; and therefore he is earnestly to be sought unto by continual prayer, and dependence upon his promises.

2. His doxology, v. 11. From this doxology we may learn that those who have obtained grace from the God of all grace should and will ascribe glory, dominion, and power, to him for ever and ever.

II. He recapitulates the design of his writing this epistle to them (v. 12), which was,

1. To testify, and in the strongest terms to assure them, that the doctrine of salvation, which he had explained and they had embraced, was the true account of the grace of God, foretold by the prophets and published by Jesus Christ.

2. To exhort them earnestly that, as they had embraced the gospel, they would continue stedfast in it, notwithstanding the arts of seducers, or the persecutions of enemies.

(1.) The main thing that ministers ought to aim at in their labours is to convince their people of the certainty and excellency of the Christian religion; this the apostles did *exhort and testify* with all their might.

(2.) A firm persuasion that we are in the true way to heaven will be the best motive to stand fast, and persevere therein.

III. He recommends *Silvanus*, the person by whom he sent them this brief epistle, as a brother whom he esteemed faithful and friendly to them, and hoped they would account him so, though he was a minister of the uncircumcision. Observe, An honourable esteem of the ministers of religion tends much to the success of their labours. When we are convinced they are faithful, we shall profit more by their ministerial services. The prejudices that some of these Jews might have against *Silvanus*, as a minister of the Gentiles, would soon wear off when they were once convinced that he was a faithful brother.

IV. He closes with salutations and a solemn benediction. Observe,

1. Peter, being at Babylon in Assyria, when he wrote this epistle (whither he travelled, as the apostle of the circumcision, to visit that church, which was the chief of the dispersion), sends the salutation of that church to the other churches to whom he wrote (v. 13), telling them that God had *electd* or chosen the Christians at Babylon out of the world, to be his church, and to partake of eternal salvation through Christ Jesus, together with them and all other faithful Christians, ~~ROM~~ 1 Peter 1:2. In this salutation he particularly joins Mark the evangelist, who was then with him, and who was his son in a spiritual sense, being begotten by him to Christianity. Observe, All the churches of Jesus Christ ought to have a most

affectionate concern one for another; they should love and pray for one another, and be as helpful one to another as they possibly can.

2. He exhorts them to fervent love and charity one towards another, and to express this by giving *the kiss of peace* (v. 14), according to the common custom of those times and countries, and so concludes with a benediction, which he confines to those *that are in Christ Jesus*, united to him by faith and sound members of his mystical body. The blessing he pronounces upon them is *peace*, by which he means all necessary good, all manner of prosperity; to this he adds his *amen*, in token of his earnest desire and undoubted expectation that the blessing of peace would be the portion of all the faithful.