

LESSON SIX - 1 & 2 PETER

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1. Living as church members and officers. 5:1-7.
  1. This may seem unrelated to what had preceded, but the word "therefore" suggests to the contrary.
    1. It is likely that the thought of judgment beginning from the house of God (4:17) prompted Peter to focus on the need for purity of heart before God in relationships among those in the church.
    2. The connection is: since purifying judgment is beginning with God's house, and especially with the leaders in God's house, therefore I exhort the elders among you.
  2. Elders: Shepherd God's flock rightly. 5:1-4.
    1. Few passages show more clearly the importance of the eldership in the early church.
      1. The eldership is the basic office in the church.
        1. Paul ordained elders in every church. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
        2. Elders had the financial administration of the church; it was to them that Paul and Barnabas delivered the money sent to relieve the poor of Jerusalem in the time of famine. Acts 11:30.
        3. At the Jerusalem conference the elders and the apostles are spoken of together as the chief authorities of the church. Acts 15:2; 16:4.
        4. When Paul made his last visit to Jerusalem it was to the elders that he reported and they suggested the course of action he should follow. Acts 21:18-25.
        5. One of the most moving passages in the New Testament is Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders whom Paul describes as overseers of the flock of God and the defenders of the faith. Acts 20:28-29.
        6. From the Pastoral Epistles we learn that elders were rulers and teachers, and by that time were paid. 1 Tim. 5:17.
      2. It is to elders that Peter now addresses himself, and he does not hesitate to describe himself as a fellow elder.
        1. Peter discusses the perils and privileges of the eldership in a series of contrasts.
          1. The elder is to accept the office not under coercion, but willingly.
          1. The responsibility of an elder has been trivialized in our day; it is no more than a minor inconvenience that can readily be

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declined.

2. This does not mean that an individual is to grasp the office or enter upon it without self-examination.
3. Any Christian will have a certain reluctance to enter upon the office because he knows his unworthiness and inadequacy better than any other person.
4. Further, there is a sense in which acceptance is of compulsion, just as with Paul's proclamation of the gospel. 1 Cor. 9:16.
5. The love of Christ constrains us. 2 Cor. 5:14.
2. On the other hand there is a manner of accepting the office and rendering the service as if it were a grim and unpleasant duty.
  1. It is possible for a person to accept a request in such a way that the entire action is spoiled.
  2. Peter does not say that a man should be conceitedly or irresponsibly eager for office, but that every Christian should be anxious to render such service as he can, although fully aware of how unworthy he is to render it.
2. The elder is to accept office not to make a shameful profit out of it, but eagerly.
  1. The noun form of the word translated *making a shameful profit* was a characteristic that the Greeks loathed.
  2. Theophrastus, a Greek delineator of character -- *meanness* - as it might be translated - is the desire for base gain.
  3. It is the mean man who never sets enough food before his guests and who gives himself a double portion when he is carving. He waters the wine; he goes to the theater only when he can get a free ticket. He never has enough money to pay the fare ("shell out falter") and always borrows from those with him.
  4. Meanness is an ugly fault.
    1. It is clear that there were those in the early church who accused preachers, elders, and missionaries of being in the job for what they could get out of it.
    2. Paul repeatedly declared that he coveted no man's goods and worked with his hands to meet his own needs so that he was burdensome to no man. Acts 20:33; 1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 12:14.

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3. It is certain that the payment any early preacher or elder received was pitifully small and the repeated warnings that they must not be greedy for gain shows that there were those who coveted more. 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11.
4. Peter's point is that no man dare accept office or render service for what he can get out of it.
5. His desire must ever be to give and not to get.
5. This is not to say that the elder is not rewarded; Peter points the elder to an unfading crown of glory
  1. This crown appears in many contexts, but in them all it is a sign of special honor.
  2. There are passages that promise a crown to all believers (e.g., 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11), but in each instance "crown" seems to be used as a metaphor for the heavenly life in general.
3. The elder is to accept office not to be a petty tyrant, but to be the shepherd and the example of the flock.
  1. Human nature is such that for many people power and prestige or more desirable than money.
  2. There are those who love authority even if it is exercised in a narrow sphere.
    1. Milton's Satan thought it better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven.
    2. Shakespeare spoke about a proud man who, dressed in a little authority, played such fantastic tricks before high heaven as to make the angels weep.
  3. The great characteristic of the shepherd is his selfless care of and his sacrificial love for the sheep.
  4. Peter surely remembered the teaching of Jesus. Mark 10:42-44.
3. The elder-shepherd cares for those that God has allotted to his care.
  1. The eldership, and indeed any offer of service, is never earned by any merit of ours, but always allotted to us by God.
  2. The care must be provided as God would have you do (v. 2 in better manuscripts).
  3. This could mean simply "like God" - Shepherd your people like God.
2. One of the lovely things about this passage is Peter's attitude.

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1. He begins by placing himself beside those to whom he speaks -- fellow-elder.
  1. He does not separate himself from them, but shares the problems and the experience with them.
  2. In one thing, however, he is different -- he has memories of Jesus that crowd into his mind and colors this entire passage.
2. He describes himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ.
  1. We may question that since Peter along with the others forsook Christ and fled. Matt. 26:56.
  2. When we think of it further, however, we understand that it was given to Peter to see the sufferings of Christ in a more poignant manner than any other human being.
    1. He followed Christ into the inner courtyard, and there he denied Christ three times before the cock crew.
    2. The trial ended and Jesus was led away to be crucified.
    3. There then comes what may be one of the most tragic passages in scripture, "the Lord turned and looked at Peter. . .and Peter went out and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61-62.
    4. In that look Peter saw the suffering heart of a leader whose follower had failed him in his bitterest hour of need.
    5. Truly, Peter was a witness of the Christ when men deny him, and that is why he was so eager that his people might be staunch in loyalty and faithful in service.
    6. Peter wants them and us to know that restoration is possible even from grievous sin.
    7. Paul made a similar use of his life as an example of restoration. 1 Tim. 1:15-16.
  3. He describes himself as a sharer in the glory that is going to be revealed.
    1. This has a backward and a forward look.
    2. Peter had already had a glimpse of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.
    3. The sleeping three had been awakened, and, as Luke puts it, "they kept awake and they saw his glory." Luke 9:32.
    4. But Peter also knew there was glory to come, for Jesus had promised to his disciples a share in the glory when the Son of Man should come to sit on his glorious throne. Matt. 19:28.

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4. When Peter speaks of shepherding the flock he must certainly be remembering the words of Jesus at a most memorable breakfast. John 21:15-17.
5. When Peter speaks of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd many memories must have been in his mind.
  1. Jesus likened himself to the shepherd who sought the lost sheep at the peril of his life. Matt. 18:14-14; Luke 15:4-7.
  2. He was moved with pity for the crowds for they were as sheep without a shepherd. Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:4.
  3. Above all, Jesus had likened himself to the Good Shepherd who was ready to lay down his life for the sheep. John 10:1-18.
  4. The picture of Jesus as a shepherd was a precious one, and the privilege of being a shepherd of the flock of Christ was for Peter the greatest privilege that a servant of Christ could enjoy.
  5. The exhortation that Peter uses here is the same that Jesus used in John 21:16.
3. Younger people (and all others): Be subject to the elders. 5:5a.
  1. The question here is whether Peter is addressing groups based on sex and age or addressing all younger and their relationship with elders.
    1. "Elders" in the New Testament can mean either "older people" or the governing authority of the church, depending on the context.
      1. Some suggest that "older people" is the correct translation here because Peter does not say that all younger people should be subject to the elders; thus, the contrast seems to be one of age and not church office.
      2. However, several considerations make it likely that we should understand a reference to the office, as in v. 1, rather than to older people generally.
        1. The word "likewise" in v. 5 suggests that Peter is continuing the discussion begun in vv. 1-4.
        2. Since the subject in the opening verses relates to the office, the "likewise" suggests that v. 5a refers to the office "likewise," and the relationship of the younger to the elders.
        3. Unless there is good reason to do otherwise, the common reader would assume that Peter is referring to the same group when the word is used so closely together..
        4. The expression "be subject" implies submission to authority, not

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just deference or respect.

2. Even so, why did Peter speak only to the younger and seem to address only the males?
  1. First, up until recently it was common to address both sexes with the masculine when both were spoken of together or the gender was undetermined.
  2. Second, the younger may be in greater need of such instruction to be in subjection to authority since very often the young rebel against authority. (This is true even today, especially when we send our children to Christian colleges that sometimes teach them things designed to foment rebellion in congregations that are faithful to the patterns of scripture.)
  3. If those who are likely to be most independent-minded and even at times rebellious against the elders are commanded to be subject, then it follows that everyone else must be subject to the elders as well. (This assumes that the elders are not violating scripture.)
  4. Polycarp wrote in his *Epistle of Polycarp*, and used the same word in commanding the "younger" to be subject to the elders and deacons as to God and Christ, and the context clearly indicates that church officers are in view.
3. Learn from this that elders to have authority in the church.
4. All of you: Be humble toward each other. 5:5b.
  1. Here Peter moves to a new subject, from the relationship between elders and the congregation to the relationship between all members of the congregation to one another.

*Comment: [Remember that verses and paragraphs are not inspired. Verses were inserted by Stephanus in 1551 and paragraphs came much later, mostly in modern speed translations. Those who find the verse divisions less than helpful suggest that Stephanus made the divisions while riding horseback and that a verse was made everywhere the pencil jotted the paper as Stephanus bounced on the saddle.]*
  2. God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.
  3. Peter well knew the power of pride.
    1. He had boasted that he would never deny Christ even if all of the others did; he would remain true.
    2. From the height of that proud boast he fell into the abyss of denial.
      1. Was there ever a morning when the crowing of the cock did not remind Peter again of Jesus' word predicting his denials.
      2. Yet Peter was chastened, humbled, and restored.
      3. His pride had cast him down, but his Lord had lifted him up.
  4. Here again it may be that memories of Jesus are in Peter's heart.

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1. The word he uses for *clothe yourselves* is very unusual; it is derived from a word that describes anything that is tied with a knot.
2. It was commonly used of protective clothing or for a pair of sleeves drawn over the sleeves of a robe and tied in a knot behind the neck.
3. And it was used for a slave's apron.
  1. There was a time when Jesus had put on just such an apron.
  2. At the Last Supper he took a towel and girded himself and began to wash the disciples feet. John 13:5.
5. It so happens that the same word is used of putting on a long, stole-like garment that was a sign of honor and preeminence.
  1. We must put the two together to get the whole picture.
  2. Like Christ, we must put on the apron of humility and serve our fellow man by serving Christ, but that very apron of humility will become a garment of glory for us when Christ returns.
5. Humble yourselves before God. 5:6.
  1. "Therefore," since God is opposed to the proud we must humble ourselves before him.
  2. The Christian must humble himself beneath the mighty hand of God, a phrase common in the Old Testament used commonly in connection with the deliverance that God wrought for his people when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. Ex. 13:9; Deut. 3:24; 9:6.
    1. The idea is that God's mighty hand is on the destiny of his people if they will humbly and faithfully fulfill his will.
    2. The Christian never resents the experiences of life and never rebels against them, because he knows that the mighty hand of God is on the tiller of his life and that God has a destiny for him. (In due time he will exalt you.)
    3. Neither the specific time nor the kind of "exaltation" is expressed so it is best to understand the statements generally.
    4. When God deems best, whether in this life or the next one, God may lift you up from your humble conditions and exalt you in the manner that seems best to him - perhaps only in terms of increased spiritual blessing and deeper fellowship with himself.
6. Gain humility by casting your cares on God. 5:7.
  1. No new sentence should be begun here; it is a participial phrase telling us how the humility enjoined in v. 6 is to be obtained.
    1. Peter recognizes that a great barrier to putting others first and thinking

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of them as more important is the legitimate human concern, "But who, then, will care for me?"

2. The answer is that God himself will care for our needs.
  2. The Christian must cast all of his care upon God.
    1. Psa. 55:22 - Cast your burden on the Lord.
    2. Matt. 6:25-34 - Don't be anxious about tomorrow.
  3. The reason that we can do this with confidence is that we can be certain that God cares for us.
  4. As Paul argued, If God has given us his Son, shall he not with him give us all things. Rom. 8:32.
  5. Since God cares for us, we can be certain that he is not out to break us but to make us.
  6. This is the path to humility because it frees one from constant concern for himself and enables him truly to be concerned for the needs of others.
2. Living as Christians in spiritual conflict. 5:8-11.
    1. Beware of the devil. 5:8.
      1. The devil refers to an actual personal being who is in active rebellion against God and who has leadership of many demons like himself. Matt. 4:1-11; 13:39; 25:41; Rev. 12:9, etc.
      1. There are those who tell us that the Devil does not exist.
        1. Peter begs to differ.
        2. Satan could not ask for better cover than the illusion that he does not exist.
      2. Peter here views Satan as a cunning and evil personal being who has the ability and the propensity to attack and harm Christians.
        1. One reason for alertness, as we have learned in this day of terrorism, is the genuine danger of attacks by the enemy.
          1. Just as we remember 9/11, the Christians had seen human blood dripping from the chops of lions in the gory spectacles of a Roman amphitheater.
          2. The time was approaching when Ignatius would anticipate his death in the Roman Colosseum: Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread . . . Come fire and cross and grapplings with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, hacking of limbs, crushings of my whole body, come cruel tortures of the devil to assail me. Only be it mine to attain unto Jesus Christ.



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2. The opposite of this sober watchfulness is a kind of spiritual drowsiness in which one sees and responds to situations no differently than unbelievers, and God's perspective on each event is seldom if ever considered.
2. The fact that we cast all of our care upon God does not mean that we can sit or stand by and do nothing.
3. Cromwell's advice to his troops is apropos: "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry."
4. The Christian is the person who trusts but at the same time puts all his effort and all his vigilance into the business of living for Christ.
2. Resist the devil with firm faith. 5:9.
  1. The fact that Satan has been cast down from heaven and knows that his time is short makes him, in a sense, a more formidable adversary.
    1. His fury against the Lord and his kingdom is more intense.
    2. He may threaten the church from within, masquerading as an angel of light. 2 Cor. 11:14; Acts 20:29.
  2. The danger to the Christian is not that he is helpless before the Devil.
    1. He is equipped with the whole armor of God; the shield of faith will extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one. Jas. 4:7.
    2. The danger to the Christian is that he will fail to resist, that he will not watch and pray, that he will not put on the whole armor of God, that he will not take up the sword of the Spirit.
    3. That sword was the weapon that Jesus used in his temptations in the wilderness; it is ours to use.
  3. Satan can be resisted only in a firm and settled faith.
    1. The word used here for "firm" is used in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 50:7: For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.
    2. Peter has reminded us that the testings do not destroy our faith, but purify it.
      1. Since the peculiar nature of faith is its looking, not to oneself, but to the Lord, it is most strongly grounded when it is most dependent.
      2. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
      3. So the Lord said to Paul, and Paul could therefore say: "For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Cor. 12:9-10.

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4. Remember that the same suffering that you endure is being accomplished, experienced by; your brethren throughout the world.
  1. Suffering is inherent in Christianity (1 Tim. 2:12), but the bond that unites you to Christ unites you to your brethren around the world.
  2. Knowing of the suffering of the brotherhood stimulates hope.
3. God will restore you after you have suffered for a little while. 5:10-11.
  1. The sense is that the suffering and attacks of the devil that accompany the suffering may seem difficult but that will not last long.
  2. Indeed, after you have suffered for a little while (note is does not say "after the suffering is over"), a phrase left vague in the amount of time that it implies, the God of all grace will accomplish great things for you.
    1. He will restore you.
      1. The word translated "restore" or "perfect" is commonly used for setting a fracture; it is used in Mark 1:19 for mending nets.
      2. It means to supply that which is missing, to mend that which is broken.
      3. So suffering, if accepted in humility and trust and love, can repair the weaknesses of a man's character and add the greatness that so far is not there.
        1. It is said that Sir Edward Elgar once listened to a young girl singing a solo from one of his own works. She had a voice of exceptional purity and clarity and range and an almost perfect technique. When she had finished Elgar said softly, "She will be really great when something happens to break her heart.
        2. Suffering does something for us that an easy way could never do.
        3. Suffering is meant by God to add the grace notes to life.
    2. He will establish you.
      1. This word means to make as solid as granite.
      2. Suffering will do one of two things to a man - it will either make him collapse or the will leave him with a solidity of character that he could never have gained anywhere else or any other way.
    3. He will strengthen you.
      1. The Greek word means to fill with strength.
      2. Here is the same sense again - a life with no effort and no discipline almost inevitably becomes a flabby life.
      3. No one really knows what his faith means to him until it has been

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tried in the furnace of affliction.

4. The wind will extinguish a weak flame, but it will fan a strong flame into a still greater blaze.
5. There is something doubly precious about a faith that has come victoriously through pain and sorrow and disappointment.
4. He will settle you.
  1. The Greek means to lay a foundation.
  2. When we have met sorrow and suffering we are driven to the very bedrock of faith.
  3. It is then that we discover what are the things that cannot be shaken.
  4. It is in time of trial that we discover the great truths on which real life is founded.
  5. It is then that we truly discover how firm a foundation is promised for the saints of the Lord.
  6. Paul's words may be laid beside Peter's: Eph. 3:16-21 -- **Ephesians 3:16-21** <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
3. Overwhelmed by the promise of God's triumphant grace, Peter can only worship -- **1 Peter 5:11** To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.
3. Closing greetings. 5:12-14.
  1. I am sending this by faithful Silvanus. 5:12a.
    1. When we gather up the references to Silas we discover that he was one of the pillars of the early church.
      1. Along with Judas Barsabas he was sent to Antioch with the epoch-making decision of the council in Jerusalem that the doors of the church were to be opened to the Gentiles.
      2. In the account of that mission Silas and Judas are called leading men among the brethren. Acts 15:22, 27.
      3. He was a prophet. Acts 15:32.

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4. He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey. Acts 15:37-40.
5. He was with Paul in Philippi, where he was arrested and imprisoned with Paul. Acts 16:19, 25, 29.
6. He rejoined Paul in Corinth and with him preached the gospel there. Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19.
7. He is joined with Paul and Timothy and the senders of the letters to Thessalonica. 1 Thess. 1:1,2; 2 Thess. 1:1.
2. Clearly Silas was a most notable man in the early church.
  1. He was one of those men the church can never do without.
  2. He was content to take second place and labor in the background so long as God's work was done.
  3. It was enough for him to be Paul's assistant, even if Paul forever overshadowed him.
  4. It was enough to be Peter's messenger, even if it meant only a bare mention of his name at the end of the letter.
  5. For all of that, it is no little thing to go down in sacred history as the faithful laborer on whom both Paul and Peter depended.
  6. The church always has need of people like Silas who, though they cannot be Peters or Pauls can still assist the Peters and Pauls to do their work.
2. Stand in the grace I have described. 5:12b.
  1. Because Peter's witness is true, his encouragement is real.
  2. In 2 Peter 2:2 Peter warned that the way of truth will be brought into disrepute by false teachers.
  3. At the end of this letter, also, Peter is concerned that his readers hold fast to the truth.
  4. They have received the gospel of God's grace; let them stand fast in it.
  5. They cling not to an impersonal moral code, nor to a philosophical abstraction, but to the Son of the Living God who gave them life by his death.
3. Greetings from the church in Rome and from Mark. 5:13.
  1. As we learned in the introduction, Babylon is a code word for Rome.
    1. She who is in Babylon means literally "fellow-elect," but it is in the feminine.
      1. Some have thought that Peter was referring to his wife who had accompanied him on his travels and who, according to tradition,

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was martyred.

2. However, from an early time Peter's words have been understood as referring to the church in Rome.
2. That church, like the churches to which Peter writes, is elect, a new people of God, sprinkled with the blood of Christ. 1:1-2.
2. Peter's greetings come not only from the church but also from Mark, whom Peter calls his son in the love of Christ.
  1. It was Mark's mother's home where the disciples prayed for Peter's release and to which Peter went after his release. Acts 12:12.
  2. It was Mark who penned the gospel that bears his name.
  3. Mark was to Peter what Timothy was to Paul.
4. Greet one another. 5:14a.
  1. The kiss of love was a practice in the early church. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26.
  2. Early church writers (e.g., Tertullian, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem and Justin Martyr) described it as an integral part of worship.
  3. Others (e.g., Athenagoras, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian) warned against its abuse.
  4. Some later substituted for it in later times (c. 13th century) by using such things as a little wooden or metal tablet with a picture of the crucifixion on it. Others substituted a courteous bow.
  5. Modern translations adapt to modern times by saying "have a hearty handshake all around." [This is an obvious instance of modern speech commentary instead of translation.]
5. Peace to all who are in Christ. 5:14b.
  1. Thus Peter closes his letter as he began it, by pronouncing the blessing of peace in Christ's name. 1:2.
  2. He leaves his people to the peace of God which is greater than all the troubles and distresses the world can bring.
  3. The roar of the lion or the flames of persecution cannot overthrow the *shalom* of Christ's salvation.