

# FIRST PETER

## Chapter 5

*Shepherd the Flock God*

**So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

**5:1** *fellow elder.* Peter, who identified himself as an apostle at the beginning of his letter (1:1), chooses now to identify himself with the elders of the churches (cf. 2Jn 1; 3Jn 1). This would be heartening to them in light of their great responsibilities and the difficult situation faced by the churches. The churches for which these elders were responsible were scattered across much of Asia Minor (see 1:1), so if Peter was a local church officer, he must have been officially related to one of them. (CSB)

Words used in the NT to describe the pastoral office. “All who preside over churches are both bishops and elders” (Tr 62). (TLSB)

*witness of the sufferings of Christ.* Peter had been with Jesus from the early days of his ministry and was a witness of all its phases and aspects, including the climactic events of his suffering (cf. Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54; Lk 22:60–62; Jn 18:10–11, 15–16). In this letter he bears notable witness to Christ’s sufferings (see 2:21–24) and obeys his command in Ac 1:8. (CSB)

Peter was with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry; he was a witness of all of its phases, including the climactic events of His suffering and resurrection. (TLSB)

*partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.* Peter witnessed Christ’s glory in his ministry in general (see Jn 1:14; 2:11), and, as one present at the transfiguration (see Mt 16:27; 17:8), he had already seen the glory of Christ’s coming kingdom. In God’s appointed time, just as Christ suffered and entered into glory, so all his people, after their sufferings, will participate in his future glory. (CSB)

Peter witnessed the transfiguration and saw the resurrected Christ. (TLSB)

**5:2** *shepherd the flock of God.* A metaphor that our Lord himself had employed (Jn 10:1–18; Lk 15:3–7) and that must have been etched on Peter’s mind (see Jn 21:15–17; cf. 1Pe 2:25). Peter is

fulfilling Christ's command to feed his sheep as he writes this letter. What he writes to the elders is reminiscent of Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (especially Ac 20:28). The term "shepherd" is an OT metaphor as well (see Eze 34:1–10, where the Lord holds the leaders of Israel responsible for failing to care for the flock). (CSB)

As Christ fed and shepherded His followers, pastors care for their churches. (TLSB)

*exercising oversight.* The same term is used in Ac 20:28; Php 1:1; 1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:7. It is clear from this passage, as well as from Ac 20:17, 28, that the three terms "elder," "overseer" and "shepherd" all apply to one office. (CSB)

*not for shameful gain, but eagerly* – Pastors should serve gladly and willingly. "Truly good works should be done willingly, or from a voluntary spirit, by those whom God's Son has made free" (FC SD IV 18). Luther: "A pastor must not only lead to pasture by teaching the sheep how to be true Christians: but, in addition to this, he must also repel the wolves, lest they attack the sheep and lead them astray with false doctrine and error. For the devil does not rest. Now today one finds many people who can let the Gospel be preached, provided that one does not cry out against the wolves and preach against the prelates. But even if I preach in the right way and tend and teach the sheep, this protecting and guarding does not suffice to keep the wolves from coming and leading the sheep astray. For what is built if I lay stones and watch someone else knock them down?" (AE 30:135). (TLSB)

**5:3** *not domineering over those in your charge.* Cf. Mt 16:24–27; Mk 10:42–45; Php 2:6–11; 2Th 3:9. Although Peter has full apostolic authority (see v. 1), he does not lord it over his readers in this letter, but exemplifies the virtues he recommends. (CSB)

Pastors are servants of the Church, not taskmasters (Mk 10:42–45; cf Php 2:6–11). (TLSB)

*examples* – Modeling the faith as well as teaching it. (TLSB)

**5:4** *Chief Shepherd.* Christ. When he returns, he will reward those who have served as shepherds under him. (CSB)

Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 5:23). All pastors serve under His authority and ministry. (TLSB)

*unfading crown.* See 1:4. (CSB)

Symbol of salvation. (TLSB)

**5:5** *be subject.* The theme that runs throughout 2:13–3:6. Here it applies to church leaders. (CSB)

The young in faith are especially in need of the pastor's spiritual care. This is a blessing, not a burden. (TLSB)

*clothe yourselves... with humility toward one another.* Peter may have had in mind the footwashing scene of Jn 13, in which he figured prominently. Although he was at first rebellious, he writes now with understanding (see Jn 13:7). (CSB)

Do not boast; consider yourself a servant of others. (TLSB)

*gives grace* – True honor comes from the Lord; He knows what we need and provides it. (TLSB)

**5:6** *at the proper time he may exalt you.* His help will come at just the right time. (CSB)

When it fits God’s purpose and benefits others or ourselves. (TLSB)

**5:7** *casting all your anxieties on him* – eipirphantes meaning to “throw them” because it is a care to Him concerning you. The Christian attitude is not negative self-abandonment or resignation, but involves one’s self-humbling to trust God with your troubles. – It is not always God who smites us down, but it is always God who lifts us up. (PBC)

Pray knowing that God provides for your needs. “The person who knows that he has a Father who is gracious to him through Christ truly knows God” (AC XX 24). (TLSB)

*he cares for you* – This expresses a belief which is distinctive of Christianity and of biblical faith. Christians begin with, and are meant to build on, the confidence that God does care.

**5:8** *Be sober-minded.* See 1Th 5:6, 8. – To be free of cares should not make a Christian complacent or careless. Peter, himself, had a lot of trouble with this. (CSB)

Pray for Christ’s return (cf 1Th 5:6, 8). (TLSB)

*watchful.* Perhaps Peter remembered his own difficulty in keeping awake during our Lord’s agony in Gethsemane (see Mt 26:36–46). (CSB)

Do you wonder why you still find certain sins so fascinating even when you’ve been burned by them before? Well, says Peter, wake up and realize what you’re up against in your life: you have a fearsome enemy, one of the greatest of the spirit world, a dragon whose spiky tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky, that is, seduced other angels to join his rebellious conspiracy (Revelation 12:3-4). What a dreadful thought – this evil, worldwide, powerful spirit is committed to dragging you off to hell too. (PBC)

*your adversary* – It is like that of a staling attorney in the courtroom before the judge. (LL)

*like a roaring lion* – Peter may be comparing Satan with a lion because of the impending killing of Christians by wild beasts in the Roman arena. (Concordia Pulpit Resources Volume 9, Part 2)

Satan seeks to harm Christians in any way possible. Under Nero, some Christians literally faced death by lions in the Roman arena. The devil “tries every trick and does not stop until he finally wears us out, so that we either renounce our faith or throw up our hands and put up our feet, becoming indifferent or impatient” (LC V 26). (TLSB)

**5:9** *resist him* – But here is the good news: the descendant of the woman, prophesied in Eden, has crushed the serpent’s head. His power to accuse (that’s what the name devil actually means) is broken, for Christ has forgiven all sin. Satan’s power to control and manipulate is broken, because the Spirit of the Lord lives in the believers and shares His strength. James says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). One little word can indeed fell him, the word of the gospel, that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. (PBC)

By God's Word, which gives us strength and guidance to face temptations (Eph 6:11–18). (TLSB)

*your brotherhood.* They are not isolated; they belong to a fellowship of suffering. (CSB)

Christians in other times and places also faced persecution and have demonstrated the strength of God's care for His people. Luther: "You must be sober and vigilant, but in order that the body may be ready. But this does not yet vanquish the devil. It is done only in order that you may give the body less reason to sin. The true sword is your strong and firm faith. If you take hold of God's Word in your heart and cling to it with faith, the devil cannot win but must flee" (AE 30:142). (TLSB)

It can be comforting to know that other faithful Christians are suffering in similar ways. Just because you are suffering does not mean that there is something wrong with you. Remember that your brothers and sisters in faith all over the world are suffering too as they wait for Christ to return and create a new heaven and a new earth. (PBC)

**5:10** *have suffered a little while* – The same God who called you to eternal glory through the gospel will not let your sufferings go on one minute longer than He allows, and He already has His plan of relief ready to go. From God's point of view, your sufferings last just a little while, for at just the right time our loving Father will come with strength and restoration. (PBC)

*will restore you* – God will care for all our needs, even in persecution. "God has kindled in their hearts this beginning of true godliness. He will further strengthen and help them in their great weakness to persevere in true faith unto the end" (FC SD II 14). "Through the Word, by which He calls us, the Holy Spirit bestows grace, power, and ability for this purpose" (FC SD XI 33). (TLSB)

**5:11** *the dominion* – *kratos* means "might" occurs 12 times in the NT, eleven of God and only once of the devil. – There is no verb in the Greek of this verse. It may be the language of prayer, i.e. so may it be. It is more probably the language of acknowledgement and as in 4:11, and in the familiar ending of the Lord's prayer.

Words of praise are a fitting response to God's blessings. (TLSB)

*amen* – This adds an emphatic endorsement. Such an assertion affords the fullest ground of confidence and courage. (CSB)

**5:1–11** The chief Shepherd calls undershepherds to teach, preach, administer the Sacraments, and guard His sheep, always keeping in mind that sin and the devil seek to entrap them. The devil and false teachers, even though they are damned, would lead us astray through sin and temptation, and take us to hell. By the Gospel, we have fervent love for one another because we share the same faith, Baptism, and Spirit. We will endure by God's power. • Almighty God, keep us strong in faith through Your Word, that we constantly behold Your Son, who saves us from sin and eternal death. Amen. (TLSB)

*Final Greetings*

**12** By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. **13** She who is at Babylon,

**who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 14 Greet one another with the kiss of love.**

**5:12** *Silvanus*. May have been the bearer of the letter to its destination. He no doubt was also a scribe who recorded what Peter dictated and who aided, as an informed and intelligent secretary, in the phrasing of Peter's thoughts. (CSB)

Also known as Silas; scribe who wrote what Peter dictated, helped him compose the Letter, or delivered it. (TLSB)

*stand firm* – The Gospel of God's grace strengthens Christians who are experiencing persecution. (TLSB)

**5:13** *she* – The Church at Rome. (TLSB)

*Babylon*. Symbolizes Rome's persecution of believers. (TLSB)

*Mark my son*. Peter regards Mark with such warmth and affection that he calls him his son. It is possible that Peter had led Mark to Christ. Early Christian tradition closely associates Mark and Peter (see Introduction to Mark: Author). (CSB)

In the faith (cf 1Tm 1:18). (TLSB)

**5:14** *kiss*. Common greeting of friends and family. (TLSB)

*Peace to all ... in Christ*. Spiritual well-being and blessedness to all who are united to Christ. Peter thus ends with a reference to the union of believers with Christ, a concept fundamental to the understanding of the whole letter. (CSB)

True peace is ours because of Christ's work. (TLSB)

**5:12–14** Peter encourages these persecuted Christians to stand firm in the one thing that is truly trustworthy: God's grace in Christ. Jesus suffered for us at the hands of evil men. Yet He trusted in His Father with unswerving faith. Whatever trials or difficulties we may face, we can likewise rely on the true grace of God and on the bond of love in our Christian family. Through Jesus, we truly have peace. • Lord Jesus, may we always rely on Your Word and Your strength, that we may confidently believe in You and always follow Your ways. Amen. (TLSB)