**Week 9**

***Clothed in Humility***

***1 Peter 5***

**7 and 20 June 2022**

**Review –** Last week we saw practically how the believers were to relate to the unbelievers around them who were going to react to their holy lives in negative ways and bring suffering upon them. Then Peter encouraged believers to understand that suffering is actually the most expected thing for those who follow Christ. We shouldn’t be surprised when it *does* happen, and during times when we *aren’t* suffering, we should reach out to help others who are. We all submit to Christ, who has gone lower than we have because He has suffered in our place. Peter has addressed the church in general to tell them how they should live, and in chapter five he is going to address the *elders* of the church to point out some special concerns that they need to consider.

**Appeals to Past, Present, and Future –** The elders were leaders of the church. An elder needed to be a man who had demonstrated wisdom and faithfulness in his walk with God. Peter admonishes them, not as a chief apostle with authority over them, but as a fellow elder alongside them. He is saying, “I am one of you. I can relate to what you are going through.” So this is an appeal to their *present* condition. Then Peter reaches back to the *past* to talk about the sufferings of Christ he had witnessed firsthand. He wants these elders to understand what perfect suffering looks like and to have a high vision of what it means to suffer. Lastly Peter points toward the *future* to say, “I, as well as you, am eagerly awaiting the glory that will come at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

**A Shepherd –** Notice that Peter didn’t begin his exhortation to the elders by saying, “Shepherd *your* flock” but “Shepherd the flock of *God*.” Why is being a shepherd such an apt metaphor for being an elder of the church? First of all, if you are a shepherd, you are in a position of humility. Being a shepherd is a very low position socially. It also involves a lot of hard work and frustration . . . because you have to work with sheep. Believers are described as sheep, which is unflattering yet very accurate, since people tend to be given to passions and unsound thinking. But being a shepherd can also be a position of influence because if you do it well, you can bring a large group into an orderly manner of following after what is good for them. So describing an elder as being a shepherd is a nice analogy, a good analogy, and an intensely personal analogy for Peter. Remember the account in John 21 in which Peter and some other disciples were out fishing one morning when Jesus called them from the shore to come and have breakfast with Him. It was a scene of reconciliation after the crucifixion and resurrection, when Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” — once for each of the three times that Peter had denied Him. And each time that Peter responded, “I do love you,” Jesus told him, *“Feed my sheep.”* Peter would have carried this admonition with him for the rest of his life, knowing that this was his job and his calling and his whole purpose in life. In fact, “feeding the sheep” is exactly what Peter was doing when he wrote his letters to the church.

**How NOT To Shepherd the Flock of God –** Peter first warns the elders that they are not to take this role under compulsion, but willingly. But why might someone feel compelled to become an elder? Perhaps because there was no one else to do it. Sometimes we just need to wait a little longer for the right person to emerge, but sometimes we do have to step in and do a job we don’t feel particularly suited to do. At such times we shouldn’t do it under compulsion, thinking that if we don’t do it, no one else will. Remember that what the Lord requires of us, He also provides a way for us to do. Another reason that someone might feel compelled to remain an elder even when it becomes a burden is that he has a salaried position, and he needs that money to feed his family. So it can be very difficult for someone in leadership to sort out what his motives are for remaining in that position for a very long time.

**Two Other Warnings –** A second thing that Peter warns against is taking on the role of elder because someone feels there is something in it for himself, whether it be financial gain or status. A third warning is against using the position of elder to gain power over others. Instead Peter says that an elder should be an example to the flock. In other words, do this job if you want your life to preach the gospel.

**An Unfading Crown –** Peter reminds the elders who are faithful that they will receive an unfading crown of glory when Christ, the Chief Shepherd, returns. He uses “unfading” because reward crowns in that day were typically made of flowers or leaves which would have quickly withered and faded. But the crown the elders can expect is imperishable.

**Clothe Yourselves with Humility –** When Peter tells the believers to “clothe yourselves” with humility, he changes the word picture from “arm yourselves”, i.e. preparing for battle, to one of servanthood. The Greek word he uses for “clothe yourselves” literally means to *tie something on*, such as a work apron worn by servants. Peter is remembering what Jesus did on the night of the Last Supper when He *tied a towel* around His waist and began to wash the disciples’ feet (see John 13). Afterwards Jesus asked them if they understood what He had done for them. He told them that they were already “clean”, i.e. had already received salvation. But their spiritual feet would still become dirty as they walked through life, and so they needed forgiveness from those around them on a regular basis.

**Complete Forgiveness –** Peter had urged his readers earlier to love one another fervently because love covers over a multitude of sins within the body of believers; now he reiterates that idea as he encourages them to clothe themselves with humility. This is a demonstration of regular, faithful, humble, repeated forgiveness of those with whom we have to do. Peter would have had in mind the time that he had asked the Lord how often he should forgive others, suggesting seven times as a good number. But the Lord responded, “No, Peter, not just seven times. Forgive seventy times seven times.” This implies utterly complete forgiveness. We are to forgive each other forever, over and over again, as much as it takes.

**Submission to God –** Peter has shown us what biblical submission looks like on the horizontal plane, i.e. toward those around us. Now he shows us what it should look like in relation to God. He tells us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. He began his letter by describing God as both Father and Judge. Now he shows that God’s hand is extended not only in strength but also in care and protection. It should inspire in us both a holy reverence for Him and a deep sense of security.

**The Right Time –** When Peter tells his listeners that God will exalt them “at the proper time”, he is setting an expectation for them. God always has a “right time” for accomplishing His purposes. Scripture tells us, for example, that at just the right time, while we were yet sinners, God sent His Son to die for us. At just the right time, the stone rolled away from the tomb. At just the right time Christ ascended into Heaven, and at just the right time the heavens will crack open and He will return. Now is *not* the proper time for His followers to be exalted, but that time is coming, and we can rest in that sure expectation.

**Casting Our Anxieties on God –** Peter tells his readers to cast all their anxieties on God. The word he uses literally means to *hurl* them on God. Why does he say this? **Our anxieties are indicators of our self-reliance.** In what areas of our lives do we find ourselves fretting? It is the areas where we are trying to take charge and be in control because we don’t really believe that God can deal with them. Peter wants us to be free from fretting and the burden of anxiety we carry, so he tells us to hurl them off onto God, because God cares about us and His mighty hand *can* deal with whatever is burdening us.

**A Roaring Lion –** Peter’s description of Satan and how sin operates is very revealing. It reminds us of what God said to Cain about sin, that it was crouching like a lion lying in wait for him. We learn several things about sin from the word picture here.

1. Sin is predatory.
2. Sin is hungry.
3. Sin is dangerous.
4. Sin and its temptation are detectable. (Just as a *roaring* lion is detectable.)

So we do need to be sober-minded and on the lookout, trusting the Holy Spirit to give us eyes to see so we can flee from temptation.

**Resistance –** Peter doesn’t just say to flee from Satan, he tells us to actively *resist* him. This is interesting in light of all that he has said previously about the importance of submission. We are to submit to authority, to each other and to God. But when it comes to Satan, we are to resist and to take a firm stand. Peter reminds us also that others are suffering just like we are. He wants us to understand that we are involved in a battle that is bigger than ourselves.

**Restoration –** Peter reminds us that our suffering is only for “a little while”. It may feel like a long time, but God will comfort, strengthen and restore us, not only in the future but even in the midst of our suffering now. God is able to bring an eternal result from our time-bound efforts of serving Him and enduring.

**Closing Greetings –** Peter first mentions Silvanus (another form of the name Silas), the man who traveled with Paul in some of his missionary journeys. He also mentions Mark, who was John Mark, Peter’s nephew and the person who wrote the gospel of Mark. In between these two specific names he mentions “she who is at Babylon”. This is an oblique reference to the church in Rome. Peter was protecting the identity of the believers who remained in Rome, who were under intense attack because they had been accused of starting the fire that had destroyed much of the city. Peter doesn’t want the church’s enemies to be aware of her existence, in case his letter falls into the wrong hands.

**The Kiss of Love –** This was the way believers greeted one another in that day and time. Expressions of affection shift as cultures change and shift, so while we may not actually kiss each other today, we should continue to demonstrate our brotherly affection for our fellow believers. (Perhaps with the “hug of love” or the “fist bump of love”.)

**The True Grace of God –** Peter concludes this letter by saying, “This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.” Peter has pointed us toward this grace over and over again throughout the letter, and this message is what he wants to have ringing in our ears when we finish reading it. Like those who benefited from a complete home makeover in a modern day TV series, Peter wants us to be eagerly looking forward to our new home in Heaven, knowing that it will be utterly spectacular and that “the bill has been paid.” Someday all of Heaven will shout the equivalent of “Move that bus!” and join in our joy as our glorious inheritance is revealed. Until then, may we stand firm in the grace and hope given to us.