

# 1 Peter

Dr. Charles “Buddy” Parrish  
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## 1 Peter 5:1-14

Vss. 1-4

- Most any organization rises or falls on the quality of its leadership. This goes for businesses, governments, social clubs like Rotary, and yes, churches. Leadership is never more important than in times of crisis. In the early days of WWII, France fell and England stood largely due to the quality of leadership in the two countries.
- Here in Ch. 5, as Peter is wrapping up his letter, he is acutely aware of the crisis that is already upon these churches. He has given them good advice about how to deal with the persecution that has begun, but he knows that these churches have their best chance at standing and not falling if their leaders, their elders, provide the strong leadership they need.
- The concept of “elders” was not a new one in Peter’s time. At God’s direction, Moses appointed 70 elders to help shoulder the burden of leading Israel. As time passed, Jewish elders were advisors to kings, (1 Kings 20:8) and friends to prophets (2 Kings 6:32). Every town or village had elders who would sit in the gate and dispense justice, oversee the government, and acted as administrators of the synagogue. By Peter’s time, Israel’s elders collectively served as the supreme court of the Jews (Acts 4:5-10).
- Around the Roman Empire, especially in the east, elders were a regular part of leadership in towns and temples, overseeing the collection and distribution of food and maintaining general order for the common good.
- In the early church “elder” had become a formal office. In Acts 14:23, elders are ordained in every church founded during the first missionary journey. In Titus 1:5, Titus is left in Crete to ordain elders in every city. Elders were to

oversee church finances, be the church's counselors, and administrators and generally provide leadership.

- Peter begins by identifying himself as one of them: "your fellow elder". But he goes further to remind them that he was a "witness of the sufferings of Christ". But wanting to connect with them, he is but "A partaker of the glory that is to be revealed", just as they are.
- His strong word to them is to "shepherd the flock of God", but he goes on to compare and contrast a good shepherd vs. a bad shepherd. First, they are to be elders not under compulsion but voluntarily. Years ago the church I was serving required 21 active deacons, but while 7 were rotating off only 4 could be found who were willing to serve. I was asked if we needed to do some arm twisting to find 3 more. "No," I said, "I'd rather go with the 4 God had called than 7 who were dragged in kicking and screaming." The best church leaders are those who GET to serve because God called them, rather than those who HAVE to serve because someone made them. Second, Peter says they must serve NOT for "sordid gain". Elders by this time were compensated by the church due to the time requirements of the office (1 Timothy 5:17-18). The motivation of the elder then was NOT to be the money, but the joy, the "eagerness", of being able to serve as Christ's shepherd. Third, elders were not to be tyrants. Jesus told the disciples in Mark 10:42-44 that leadership among them was to be different than among the Gentiles, that His leaders were to be servants. So when Peter says elders are to be "examples to the flock" he has in mind that they should set Christ-like examples, examples of pure agape-love motivated service. Fourth, if they act as Peter's kind of elders, they will receive from Christ the "unfading crown of glory". God has "allotted" these people to the elder's care and the elder will be judged as to the quality of Christ-like love and service he shows to those God has given him. In vs. 2 it says elders are to act "according to the will of God". That phrase could also be taken to mean "shepherd your flock *like God*". Elders, leaders in the church, as they accept the call of God to this position of service should remember that they are the very hands, feet, and face of Christ, the Good Shepherd, to their congregation.

## Vs. 5

- Often, young people without the benefit of experience think they know more than their elders (think Luke Skywalker when he first met Yoda). Peter himself was repeatedly guilty of this when following Jesus. And it's not that the young person is always wrong. Sometimes they are exactly right, but often here they have not learned that being right may not be more important than being loving. So young people, be in submission to your elders, but all of you clothe yourselves with humility.
- Throughout this section you get the feeling that Peter is constantly thinking back on his time with Jesus. "I am the Good Shepherd", he could still hear Jesus say. And when he says "clothe yourselves with humility" the word he uses for "clothe yourselves" is *egkombousthai*, meaning clothing tied together with a knot, like an apron, like when Jesus clothed himself by tying a towel or apron around his waist and knelt down to wash Peter's feet (John 13:4-12).

## Vss. 6-11

- We can afford to be humble, we have no need for falsely puffing ourselves up to appear bigger than we are, because by faith we live under "the mighty hand of God". It was by God's mighty hand that He brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 13:9; Deut. 9:26). With a mighty hand God will restore Israel following its captivity (Ezek. 20:33). The foreigner will hear of the great things God has done in Israel with His mighty hand (1 Kings 8:41-42). Peter wants the church to know that the mighty hand of God has always been with God's people and His hand will be with them now.
- Vs. 7 is on a lot of posts and rightly so. Paul expounds at length on this in Romans 8: "if God be for us who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The psalmist tells us to cast our burden on the Lord (Ps. 55:22) and the Lord Himself said to not be anxious for tomorrow (Matt. 6:25ff). The King of Kings and Lord of Lords cares for YOU! What do you really have to be anxious about?

- Still, we are not to live irresponsibly. “Be of sober spirit and be on the alert”. This is what Jesus asked of Peter and the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. We must be ready and willing to resist the devil remembering Paul’s words in Ephesians 6: put on the armor of God and wield His sword. And remember that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against Satan and his principalities and powers.
- And remember that we are not alone, but others all around the world are suffering a we are. During WWII, soldiers in Europe would watch news reels of the fighting in the Pacific and vice versa. It helps to know that we are not alone, but that there is a great battle waging and that we fight under the mighty hand of God!
- Peter reminds us that our suffering will not be forever, but for only a little while. After that God will perfect/restore us establish, strengthen, and settle/confirm us. The word for perfect is the same word the Greeks would use for setting a broken bone. This is what God does. He heals/restores/makes perfect what is broken, makes perfect that which was imperfect. He will strengthen us and make us like granite fixed on a solid foundation. Satan will not shake us.

#### Vs. 12

- When we began 1 Peter we spoke of how Silvanus, not Peter, actually penned the letter. We mentioned how Silvanus is the longer version of the name Silas. We do the same with names like Robert/Rob or Michael/Mike. There is little doubt that this is the same man who was the prophet who sat on the Council of Jerusalem and later would become the missionary companion of Paul on the second missionary journey. This is one of the true unsung heroes of the early church to whom we today owe a great debt.

#### Vs. 13

- Almost certainly “She who is in Babylon” refers to the church in Rome. We know from our study of Revelation, particularly chapters 17-18, how the early church spoke in code, referring to Rome as Babylon. We also know

from that study that there really was no Greek word for “church” and that the church was often referred to in the feminine because the church is “the bride of Christ” (Rev. 19:7). So it seems clear that Peter is saying the people of the church of Rome, along with his son in Christ, Mark, send their greetings. This fits with everything tradition has always said: that Peter was in Rome, with John Mark, at the time of the persecution under Nero, and where he gave his story to Mark, the story that became the Gospel of Mark, and where Peter was martyred. Like Silvanus, John Mark is one of the unsung heroes of the early church.

- There is one other piece to this. Though unlikely “She” may refer to Peter’s wife, who Clement of Alexandria says was with Peter in Rome, and who was executed in front of him. Clement reports that his last words to her were, “Remember the Lord”.

Vs. 14

- Paul repeatedly tells his people to “greet one another with the holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20). Here Peter calls it “the kiss of love”. In Jewish culture it was custom to greet your rabbi with a kiss. The church expanded that to a greeting of all the people. The early church father Tertullian called it the kiss of peace. The early church was such a tightly knit family, so close, that such intimacy was taken for granted. Sadly, as time went on and the church grew beyond small, household gatherings, the kiss was the subject of abuse and eventually set aside. There was a closeness the people of the early church enjoyed that I doubt we will ever know this side of heaven.