

First Peter 5

It is important to realize the topic has been suffering and will continue to be suffering even as we read about elders in the church.

Peter is personal in chapter 5 referring to himself (an elder) and referencing his own experience (Christ's suffering on the cross)

5:1 – In this letter written to guide the church through suffering Peter takes time to direct the leadership (elders, overseers).

Peter calls himself a “witness” (Gr. *martys*) which means more than just an eyewitness, but also one who was a participant that can bare testimony concerning his involvement in the event and knowledge of the experience.

5:2 – “Shepherd” (Greek *poimaino*) literally means “to tend” which for a shepherd of sheep would include feeding, leading and guarding. Jesus summed this up for Peter with the word “feed” in John 21:16.

The elder (or, the leader) of the church is given three basic guidelines to follow while serving as an overseer of God's people:

1. Serve willingly and not grudgingly. This is similar to the way believers are to give money, time or anything to the Lord according to 2 Cor. 9:7. You are not obligated to lead a church or serve as elder or commit to pastoring.
2. Serve enthusiastically with zeal for the cause of Christ's vision for the church. Do not serve for selfish reasons, which could be many: pay, career, popularity, fits personality profile in the high school counselor's office, etc. Elders in the church of Peter's day did receive payment for thier ministry as is seen in 1 Timothy 5:17 and 1 Corinthians 9:7-11. If elders did not get paid in the first century church then there would have been no temptation to do it for the wrong reason.
3. Lead by example not by being the authority as is seen in the words “not lord it over...being examples.” The command to “give shepherd's care is developed with the direct words not lord it over...being examples.”.

5:3 – “those in your charge” or “those allotted to your charge” is the translation of the Greek word *kleroo* which means “to make a possession” and is where we get our English word “clergy.”

The negative side of Peter's desire for church leaders could be summed up in three negative descriptors:

1. Lazy
2. Greed
3. Authoritarian

None of these would be helpful leadership skills in times of church members suffering persecution.

The churches were house churches with small groups that made up the local church body of believers in a city.

5:4 –

5:5 – “younger” refers to everyone who is not an “elder” or an “older” one. The elders are to lead by example and everyone else is to follow

5:6 – “in due time” is simply “in time” in the Greek, but it means “the proper time” and “when the time is right.” (Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42)

“humble yourselves” is done by “casting all your cares on him” (5:7). This is still to be understood in the context of the suffering they are facing. In humility they are to trust the Lord and know his timing is right.

5:7 – “casting” is “throwing on” or “loading.”

This is not an additional command, but how the original command to “humble yourselves” is done. Humbling yourself is not denying yourself of some honor, but is instead placing your trust in the Lord in the midst of suffering. Instead of complaining, worrying, compensating, manipulating in the midst of suffering (or, growth and testing) throwing your cares on him. It is as the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12:3-13 (12:7, “It is for discipline that you have to endure.”)

5:8 –

5:9 – Greek says, “your brotherhood” which refers to the group or fraternity of which you are a member. This “brotherhood” is suffering around the world.

5:10 –

5:11 –

5:12 – “Through Silvanus” could mean two things:

- Silvanus was the scribe that wrote Peter’s letter (unlikely since Mark was with Peter at this time and according to Colossians Mark was in Rome. Mark was Peter’s scribe.)
- Silvanus carried the letter to the churches that were to receive it from Paul (This is how the phrase is used in Acts 15:23; and by Ignatius in his letter to the Romans I 10:1 and to the Philadelphians in 11:2 and to the Smyrnaeans in 12:1; and by Polycarp in his letter to the Philippians in verse 14.)