

Faithful Till the End

1 Peter 5:1-14 (ESV)

¹ 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,^[a] not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^[b] 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.

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.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Background

Our passage begins with the word "So", indicating that Peter's words here follow logically from what he said in the previous chapter. In 4:17 Peter says that "it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God".

Peter has just spoken about suffering and the testing that comes to God's people. But when the heat turns up, our natural tendency is to escape the heat, to give up, or to turn away from following Jesus.

In this final chapter, Peter urges the Christians then, and us today, to stand firm in God's grace. And he shows us three ways we can hold on.

DISCUSS

1. Faithful Undershepherds (v1-5a)

Peter begins by addressing the elders, calling them to shepherd the flock (v2).

Their role is not to dominate or control (v3), but to care for God's people willing, eagerly, and by example.

This is because ultimately, the flock is "God's flock". It belongs to the Chief shepherd, Jesus, while elders and leaders are undershepherds. Just as Jesus cares for, protects, guides, and lays down his life for his sheep, elders are entrusted to shepherd in the same way. And if they shepherd faithfully, the chief shepherd will return and they will receive the unfading crown of glory (v4).

For those are not leaders, Peter reminds them, especially the younger ones, to subject themselves to their elders. When leaders shepherd in the way Peter describes and the sheep submit to them, the whole church can stand firm together, even in the face of suffering and persecution.

How have the shepherds God has placed in your life helped you keep following Jesus? How can you pray for or encourage them?

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2. Humility: Put Others Before Yourself (v5b-7)

Peter continues by calling the whole church ("all of you") to clothe themselves with humility toward one another.

When Christians face suffering and pressure, it can be easy to become frustrated with each other, focus on ourselves, and go our own way.

Humility means to put the other person's interest above our own. (cf. Philippians 2:3). This does not mean that we can never disagree, but that even when we disagree, we do so with a posture that seeks the good of others.

Peter gives us two reasons to 'wear' humility: **first, because God will exalt us at the proper time; and second, because we can cast all our anxieties on God because he cares for us.**

We can put others first because we know that God himself cares for us.

Where is God calling you to put on humility toward someone else? What is one anxiety you have been carrying on your own that you need to hand over to Jesus today?

3. Watchful: Stand Firm in Your Faith (8-11)

Peter's third protection is watchfulness. The devil is described as a roaring lion, prowling around and seeking someone to devour (v8). Peter warns us to stay clear-headed and alert, because the devil seeks to pull us away from following Jesus, especially in seasons of suffering.

The solution is simple: to resist him by standing **"firm in your faith"**. We are to *believe and trust* God through the suffering rather than *believe* the devil's lies.

Peter gives two further reasons to stand firm: **first, Christians throughout the world also experience similar sufferings; and second, our suffering is short compared to the eternal glory we will experience.** God himself *will* restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us.

What lie about your suffering have you been most tempted to believe lately, and how does the truth of Scripture challenge it?

Pray For:

1. Faithful Shepherds

Pray for our pastors and leaders, that they would love Jesus deeply and shepherd God's flock willingly, eagerly and by example.

2. Humility Toward One Another

Pray that we would put on humility, putting the interests of others before our own, and cast our anxieties on the God who cares for us.

3. Strength to Stand Firm

Pray that we would remain watchful and resist the devil's lies, trusting that God will sustain us through temporary suffering and bring us into eternal glory in Christ.