

The Book of 1 Peter Study Guide

Chapter 5

After giving instructions to believers in the Roman empire regarding the inevitability of suffering, including the importance of making an effort to prevent provoking authorities and the general public, Peter now moves on to some exhortations to the elders of the congregations on how to properly guide and care for their people.

5:1-4

- v 1 Peter appeals to the elders as a peer—a fellow leader and an eyewitness to the sufferings of Messiah—rather than using his apostolic authority to command them. That tells us something very important that some church leaders have ignored. Although Peter had the most prominent profile among the twelve Apostles, he never claimed an exalted position that entitled him to be the first pope. Instead, he simply considered himself to be one elder among all others in the believing community.

He also calls himself a “witness of the sufferings of Messiah.” We know from the gospels that Peter witnessed Yeshua’s suffering when he endured torture by the Romans. And during the crucifixion we are specifically told that John was present. But, according to Luke 23:49, “all His acquaintances” observed the event from a distance, which likely included Peter.

Here in verse 1, he also states that he was also a partaker (*koinōnos*, ‘shared in common’) of the glory of Yeshua, which likely refers to the transfiguration of Yeshua. All of these things give credibility to his exhortation to follow.

- v 2 He gives the first of three core guidelines for leadership in congregations. Leaders must shepherd or watch over the flock out of a genuine desire to serve, not out of a sense of forced obligation or duty.

Second, ministry should be driven by a passion to serve God, rather than a motivation for money or selfish financial gain.

- v 3 Third, they are to lead by example. Instead of acting like dictators or “lording it” over the people, leaders are called to guide the congregation by modeling behavior and character of Messiah.

- v 4 Peter adds some personal motivation for leaders to abide by those selfless guidelines mentioned in the previous verses. He does that by shifting the focus to a future spiritual reward.

Peter refers to Yeshua as the “Chief Shepherd,” establishing that all human leaders are merely under-shepherds who answer directly to Him. And since Yeshua is also exceedingly gracious and generous, when He returns, faithful leaders will receive an eternal reward, described as “the crown of glory,” a symbolic prize representing eternal honor.

That is an allusion that contrasts the laurel wreaths that were awarded to athletes in ancient times—which quickly dried up and died. Instead, this spiritual crown is described as unfading.

5:5-9

- v 5 At this point, Peter expands his instructions from leaders to the entire congregation, focusing on how relationships within the body should be defined by humility and trust in God. He uses the same word (*homoiōs*) that he used multiple times previously to create a chain of circumstances that called for submission particularly in the context of the threat of persecution and suffering.

It began in chapter 2 with submission to rulers and institutions of authority by all people, then submission by servants/slaves to masters, and wives to husbands in chapter 3. Now, he calls upon younger men to submit to their elders (*presbuteros*), which implies the importance of the wisdom that comes through the experiences of life.

And then, he instructs everyone in to put on humility toward one another, quoting Proverbs 3:34 to remind them that God actively opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

- v 6 Believers are told to humble themselves under God's ultimate power, trusting that He will lift them up and honor them at the right time.

- v 7 Then, instead of carrying the weight of their worries, fears, and persecutions, they are told to give them completely to God because He personally cares for them.

- v 8-9 Peter delivers a sobering warning to his audience, transitioning from internal relationships to the external spiritual battle they face. He commands believers to be clear-headed and watchful because they face a real, active enemy. He personifies the devil as a "roaring lion," actively hunting for vulnerable believers to destroy, especially through the pain of persecution. His solution is to resist the devil by standing firm in their faith, refusing to give in to fear or compromise.

Lastly, Peter reminds them that they are not alone in their suffering; as fellow believers all over the world are enduring the exact same trials.

5:10-14

- v 10 Peter offers a powerful prayer and a promise of ultimate comfort to believers who are enduring trials and spiritual warfare. He reminds believers that their ultimate destiny is "eternal glory in Messiah," a calling initiated by God Himself.

He acknowledges that followers of Yeshua will suffer, but reassures them that it is only for a "little while" when compared to eternity. He shows that God has made promises to those who suffer in four ways:

- Restore – To mend, repair, and make whole what has been broken or damaged by trials.
- Confirm – To be unwavering, and resolute so that doubts and fears cannot topple you.
- Strengthen – To infuse inner fortitude and power so you can endure and overcome adverse circumstances.
- Establish – To lay a solid foundation so you are deeply rooted, steady, and immovable in your faith.

- v 11 This verse acts as a bridge, giving all power and eternal dominion to God.
- v 12 Peter states he wrote this short letter with the help of Silvanus, also known as Silas. Silvanus is his formal Greek name recorded in the epistles of Peter and Paul. In the book of Acts, Luke uses a contraction or nickname by calling him Silas. It is in Acts that we see him introduced as a leader in the Jerusalem believing community and that he became Paul's primary companion on his second missionary journey.

His experience and authority made him an excellent contributor to Peter's message. And here we see that the intent of the letter was to encourage the readers and to testify that God's grace is real, urging them to stand firm in it.

- v 13 He passes along greetings from the believers in "Babylon," a code name often used for Rome during times of intense persecution. And since the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people only lasted 70 years, the use of that particular term emphasized to his audience that followers of Yeshua live as temporary residents in a hostile world.

He also sends greetings from Mark, whom he affectionately calls his son.

- v 14 He concludes his letter with an exhortation to greet one another with a "kiss of love," a common cultural practice expressing deep unity and family affection.

2-3 years after writing this letter, Peter would write his second and final epistle, with different issues to be addressed, and from a different location, namely from prison, because the suffering he warned about in the first letter, became an absolute, personal reality.