



ALERT LIVING

Believers must humbly depend upon God's strength to overcome Satan.

1 PETER 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of the Messiah and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you: ² Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God's will; not for the money but eagerly; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ In the same way, you younger men, be subject to the elders. And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.



6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you. 8 Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 9 Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. 10 Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little. 11 The dominion belongs to Him forever. Amen.

Underline the words that follow the word "be" in this passage. How does each word give you a clearer understanding of what God expects of His followers?

Underline promises made by God in this passage. Notice how the promises are connected to the admonitions presented.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Accidents happen. Sometimes we back our car into another car in the parking lot because we are not as alert as we should be. At times we take a wrong step on the stairs because we are not paying attention to our surroundings. Living life every day requires we be alert to our surroundings and to the pitfalls all around us. The same is true spiritually.

What are some ways that you have suffered by not being alert to your surroundings? How could you have avoided those situations?

To remain alert, we need responsible spiritual leaders who are leading receptive spiritual followers. One of the benefits of living in community as a church is that it brings together strong Christian

leaders with people who are humble enough to follow them. Together, leaders and followers can expose the work of our enemy, Satan, and can live lives that bring glory to God and magnify His grace in our lives.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

1 PETER 5:1-14

Peter concluded his letter with an exhortation for his readers to remain alert (1 Pet. 5:8). The temptation to wander in thought or action often is strongest during times of suffering. As churches faced persecution, Peter wanted to make sure both the leaders and the followers were alert to the workings of the enemy.

The apostle Paul listed some stringent demands for church leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-13). Leaders must have character and integrity. They need to be strong in leading their own families. They need to be disciplined and yet humble. They should not be new converts who have not proven they can lead people. When a church or community faces suffering, it needs strong leaders who will guide them through the hardships.

Sometimes strong leaders suffer from trying to lead those not humble enough to follow. Peter wanted to insure this did not happen by encouraging humility in the people.

The reason that both leaders and followers need to be working together is they have an enemy who is real and is engaged in an attack against them. Paul listed spiritual weapons a Christian could use when engaged in warfare (Eph. 6:10-18). Paul encouraged believers to engage in battle with the enemy through prayer. Peter likewise helped his audience realize the need for alertness.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

RESPONSIBLE SHEPHERDS (1 PET. 5:1-4)

VERSE 1

¹ Therefore, as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of the Messiah and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you:



The leaders of the church may be the first that persecutors target. Peter began by exhorting *the elders*. The term was used of those who had leadership positions in the church. These leaders had the responsibility of shepherding the church (see v. 2), a role that Peter himself embraced. This word seemed to be used interchangeably with shepherds and pastors.

Peter wrote to his fellow pastors as one who had witnessed Jesus' *sufferings*, and, like them, he looked forward to a time when God's *glory* would be *revealed*.

VERSE 2

² Shepherd God's flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God's will; not for the money but eagerly;

Peter exhorted the leaders to *shepherd God's flock* for noble reasons rather than selfish reasons. Ezekiel 34:4 prophesied about those who would shepherd the flock harshly and brutally. Ezekiel 34:8 mentioned those who cared only for themselves as they tended to God's flock. Peter encouraged pastors to shepherd the flock *freely* and *eagerly, according to God's will*. He did not want them serving only out of a sense of duty but also out of a sense of calling. He did not want them serving out of *compulsion* or in order to get *money*. He was not saying pastors should not be paid, but that money should not be their motivation for serving.

Leaders shepherd the flock in many ways. One of the primary responsibilities of shepherding the flock was preaching the gospel. By using the term *overseeing*, Peter probably included caring for the spiritual needs of the flock and administrating the church, though God had provided other leaders to do some of these responsibilities (Acts 6:1-7).

Why is it important for spiritual leaders to carefully examine their motives? How does motive impact how one leads?

VERSE 3

³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Peter encouraged church leaders not to see their position as a way to exercise authority over people. Jesus encouraged leaders to lead from humility rather than from pride in their authority (Matt. 20:25-26; Mark 10:42-43). Those who attempt to lead from their authority without humility often create resistance in their followers.

Church leaders do not build the church on their own. God is the One who builds *the flock* and has *entrusted* followers to the leaders. Therefore, leaders need to set an example by displaying humility toward the followers.

BIBLE SKILL: *Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.*

Observe the words and phrases in 1 Peter 5:1-4 that describe the shepherd and the flock. What does each word and phrase communicate to you about living the Christian life? How does the imagery of the shepherd and the flock in an earthly church setting compare to the imagery of Christ as our chief Shepherd in the eternal setting?

VERSE 4

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Peter reminded the church leaders of two important truths. First, *the chief Shepherd* would come back again. Jesus had referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). The One who displayed perfect humility would one day return, and this should motivate the shepherds under him to take good care of His flock.

Also, Jesus will reward those who have taken good care of His flock. Peter revealed that every faithful leader would receive the *unfading crown of glory*. In many cases, the Bible equates



the crown with entrance into heaven itself (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11). However, in this case it may refer to a special reward for those who faithfully serve the church in leadership.

Which do you believe to be a stronger motivator—accountability to God or reward? Explain.

TRUSTING SHEEP (1 PET. 5:5-7)

VERSE 5

⁵ In the same way, you younger men, be subject to the elders. And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Peter shifted his discussion from elders to *younger men*. This term should not be restricted only to men of a certain age; it is probably is a reference to the younger in faith who were following the leaders of the church. Peter had addressed church leaders in the previous passage, so now he addressed those who made up the church. He encouraged them with several exhortations in verses 5-7.

First, Peter encouraged the younger Christians to ***be subject to the elders***. This is not blind submission to leaders. Remember the exhortations to the leaders in verses 1-4. These are genuine, godly leaders who are leading for the right reasons.

The second exhortation is to ***clothe yourselves with humility***. To be humble is to have an accurate estimate of your own worth. It is neither thinking too highly of yourself nor thinking too lowly of yourself. It is recognizing who God is and who you are and not getting the two confused.

Peter cited Proverbs 3:34 at the end of verse 5. God acts on behalf of those who are humble. In suffering, people need the help of God. As we humble ourselves, God will come to our aid, sometimes using church leaders to minister to us.

How have you seen God resist the proud? How have you seen Him give grace to the humble?

VERSE 6

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time,

Peter continued with the theme of humility. A person who is already humble cannot be humbled by his or her circumstances. It is better to *humble* oneself than it is to be humbled by suffering, other circumstances, or others. The phrase *mighty hand of God* was used often in the Old Testament to describe God's deliverance of Israel in times of trouble. (See, for example, Ex. 3:19; 32:11; Deut. 5:15.)

Humbling oneself does not mean necessarily that God will act immediately. Peter said God would exalt them *at the proper time*. The Greek language had different ways of expressing time. Sometimes it was chronological (*chronos*), and sometimes it was an appointed time (*kairos*). This verse indicates the latter. God did not promise to deliver them on a certain chronological timetable but in due time. That might occur in their lifetime, but it might occur in eternity. Either way, God has promised to vindicate all who suffer if they humble themselves under His mighty hand.

VERSE 7

⁷ casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.

God's mighty hand can rescue us from any situation in which we find ourselves, but sometimes He chooses to delay His assistance. In the meantime, we should cast *all our care on Him*. The word used for *care* is the same as the one translated "worry" in Philippians 4:6. In that passage, Paul said that we should not worry about anything, but instead pray.

Using a different Greek word, Peter explained that God *cares about* the anxieties His children experience. God is not detached and distant. Perhaps Peter had in mind Psalm 55:22: "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."



Why do Christians sometimes hold on to their anxieties rather than presenting them to the Lord? What makes it so difficult to trust God's timing and His care for us?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace.

THE NEED FOR ALERTNESS (1 PET. 5:8-11)

VERSE 8

⁸ Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.

Peter exhorted both leaders and church members to be *serious* and *alert*. The word *alert* often occurred in the context of discussions about the end times. (See, for example, Matt. 24:42-43; 25:13; Mark 13:35,37; Luke 12:37; 1 Thess. 5:6.) It describes a watchman guarding a wall against the approach of an enemy.

Indeed, Peter noted who that enemy is. *The Devil* is on the prowl *like a roaring lion, looking* for prey. The contrast is striking. God cares for His children, while the Devil seeks to devour them.

VERSE 9

⁹ Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.

Believers are encouraged to *resist* the Devil. The word *resist* cannot be something passive but rather active. Peter also encouraged believers to be *firm in the faith*. Since in Greek there is no verb in this phrase, it could mean the way believers resist the Devil is by standing firm in the faith. They could take comfort in knowing that other believers *throughout the world* were suffering in the

same way as Peter's readers. They could bind together with other suffering believers and resist the work of the enemy.

Is your tendency to ignore the reality of the Devil or to fear him too much? How does this passage help you to find a balanced approach to dealing with the Devil?

VERSE 10

¹⁰ Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.

In a doxology that wraps up this section and the entire letter, Peter praised the One who both calls people to Himself and enables them to persevere to the end. Salvation is completely a work of God. He has called us ***to His eternal glory***. No matter how difficult the times, there is a better day coming.

Peter reminded his readers God would protect them through their suffering. He would do four things for them: ***restore, establish, strengthen, and support***. All four words emphasize the same idea—God would see them through their suffering and make them strong enough to remain faithful to Him. This would happen as they ***suffered a little***. No matter how long suffering is in this lifetime, it is brief in comparison to eternity.

VERSE 11

¹¹ The dominion belongs to Him forever. Amen.

As a final word of praise, Peter declared ***dominion belongs to*** God forever. The same God that allows the Devil to roar and seek someone to devour is the God that deeply cares for and establishes believers. Some people refuse to follow God because they cannot reconcile the suffering of man with an all-powerful God. In the short run, it might look as though God is uncaring. However, God's vantage point is eternity and His kingdom is eternal.



IN MY CONTEXT

Leaders in the church are to humbly fulfill their duties, demonstrating Christian character in their leadership. All believers are to display humility, realizing that God provides for their needs. Believers are to resist the Devil with humility lest they fall prey to him.

What are some of the qualities you appreciate in your leaders who care for the church? Take time to send a note, thanking them for the way they lead.

What burdens or anxieties are you trying to carry on your own? What steps do you need to take to humbly trust God to provide for your needs?

Discuss with the group ways of recognizing Satan's attacks. How do you respond when threatened by the enemy as you see signs of his prowling?

MEMORY VERSE

Casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.
—1 Peter 5:7