

9,15,22 1 Pet. 5, Victory Through Humility

Peter begins this last chapter with instructions to the leaders of the Church. And it would help if we kept in mind that in the first generation of Church history, a time when the Church was actually *being* the Church, all of the Christians met in what we would call house churches. There were no buildings or stadiums or high school auditoriums – just groups of believers meeting in small enough fellowships for everyone to be an active member of the body of Christ; it was a time when true ‘koinonia’ was happening. This is what the Holy Spirit determined would be the perfect environment for personal spiritual growth.

The reason I mention that is so that when we look at Peter’s exhortation to the leaders of these fellowships, you’ll have a picture other than mega-church buildings and parking lots with Christian attendants. The leaders in the early church weren’t on a stage, they were sitting next to you.

So, keeping in mind the actual structure and setting of the early churches, let’s look at 1 Pet. 5:1;

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.”

Only the first disciples of Christ “witnessed the suffering of Christ”. But it wasn’t until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost that the full meaning of those sufferings was disclosed.

Of all the eternal benefits we gain from Christ’s sufferings for us, Peter focuses on “the glory that will be revealed.”

We can never experience the suffering Christ went through to obtain our forgiveness, but we can experience the suffering Jesus had that took Him to full growth.

(Heb. 2:10) “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings”.

Jesus was sinless from birth, but He had to move from childhood to being an adult Son, a Vessel fully fit for the Father’s use. That’s the “perfection” the writer of Hebrews is referring to – it could also be translated “mature”.

We are not sinless and no matter how much we suffer to have sin burnt away from us, we will never be as mature as Christ. But just as the Father used suffering to perfect or mature His Son; the Holy Spirit uses suffering to move us as far as possible in the direction of full maturity.

Here's how Sparks explains this principle;

“If our requests for God’s intervention were granted, while we were left the same people, unchanged in disposition and nature, it would not be long before we should be in the same unhappy condition over *other* things. There is possible for us some inherent quality that reigns above our circumstances. Some of the most radiant people have been the greatest sufferers in infirmity, poverty, or other forms of adversity; whilst the most ‘privileged’ are often the most discontented.

The solution to the problem of suffering does not lie in being philosophical; it is not in fatalistic resignation – ‘This is my lot; I suppose I must accept it.’ We may have to let go the particular occasion of our trouble, and first recognize, and then embrace with our heart, the fact that in the affliction there resides the immense eternal possibility of an increase of the image of God’s Son, which is to be the one and the only character and nature of the eternal kingdom. We have too much visualized the ‘Heaven’ that is to be, as geographical and pleasurable, without giving sufficient weight to the fact of a nature to be inculcated and perfected.”

One of the reasons I read those comments by Sparks is because he also addresses what Peter tells us in the next part of vs. 1, “a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.” Here’s how Paul expresses it;

(Rom. 8:17-18) “(We are) heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

There is not only the honor of being an overcomer in time, but there is also being a “partaker of the glory that will be revealed” at the coming of Christ.

Ironside puts it the most simply: “The path of suffering, both for Christ and for His followers, ends in glory.”

Keep all these things that Peter, Sparks and Ironside wrote in mind the next time you feel like you can't go on. If you are willing to suffer for His sake, the Lord will make sure you can go on.

Now, let's move into vs. 2;

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.”

To really understand what Peter is warning the elders about, we have to contrast it with what they *should* be doing.

When Peter warns about “dishonest gain” he's referring to leaders, specifically elders who were teachers or preachers, who were motivated by the inordinate desire for monetary gain. King James translates it “for filthy lucre's sake”. That's very old school, but it's spot on.

The use of the word “dishonest” in this context is not talking about something illegal or immoral, but about a wrong motive – it's the *motive* that's “dishonest”.

On the other side of this is the truth about how all of this is *supposed* to work in the body of Christ as related to those who teach;

(1 Cor. 9:7-17) “Who goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. But I have used none of

these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.”

Paul’s main point is that he was given a stewardship that he would fulfill regardless of whether the Corinthians did or did not support him.

Those decisions are always meant to be something that’s decided between the those being taught and the Lord; they are personal and private. Mormonism is not Christianity. The Church should not have people watching to make sure everyone gives 10% of their income. That is major violation of the privacy of the members of the congregation.

There were several churches who *were* supporting Paul (like the Philippians); and Paul knew that unlike the Corinthians, they weren’t suspicious of his motives, so Paul gratefully received from them.

But the Corinthians had all kinds of problems with Paul, so although Paul wanted to make sure they understood the *principle* involved, he also made sure that teaching this principle to them *didn’t* mean he was asking them for anything.

The reason teaching elders were financially supported was not so they could be ‘official paid clergy’. As Kenneth Wuest put it in his book - “Word Studies in the Greek New Testament”;

“Under no circumstances were the elders to commercialize their ministry”.

And listen to these comments about this from J.N.D. Kelly;

“Eldership brought opportunities of profit, and it has been conjectured that some system of remuneration was already in force. In 1 Cor. 9 Paul upheld the right of teaching elders to be supported by those they taught, but declined to take advantage of it himself in relation to the Corinthian church.”

Edmond Hiebert adds this;

“The teacher is allowed a fair return for honest toil. Peter believed the exhortation of Christ in Lk. 10:7 ‘the worker deserves his wages’, but Peter was warning against taking up the work because of a desire for material

gain. It is a shameful thing for a shepherd to feed the sheep out of love for the fleece.”

Great way to put it. When a pastor looks over his congregation – does he see sheep or does he see fleeces? Do you have any doubt what Benny Hinn sees?

The *only* reason teaching elders were to be supported was so they’d have time to study and teach. That’s considered “honest toil”. Peter actually defines it this way in Acts 6:1-4;

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’”

This also shows another problem today’s pastors have caused by not “giving themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”. By getting involved in countless programs, conferences, and management responsibilities, they are robbing the members of their congregation from developing their *own* gifts and service to the Church.

The solution to the problem they faced in Acts 6 was not to try to guilt Peter into managing the food distribution to the Jewish widows. Acts 6:5 tells us that the Church was pleased with what Peter said, and they choose seven men to oversee this ministry.

Like we saw in 1 Cor. 9:11, “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?” In passages like that, Paul is not mandating something, he’s simply describing the give and take of the teacher loving the people and the people loving him in return.

It was very pure and simple 2000 years ago – now the Church has turned into ‘big business’ and almost everything is corrupt and under suspicion.

Whatever financial support *did* take place, it was never to be done out of obligation as a response to apostolic mandates.

(2 Cor. 8:12) “If there is first a willing mind (a desire to express thankfulness) it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.”

What does Paul mean by that?

There’s no specific amount of giving to be dictated by anyone. There’s no “10%” rule in New Testament giving; you won’t find that anywhere in the Bible following the formation of the Church in Acts 2.

Tithing was an Old Testament national income tax for the citizens of Israel. The Church is not Israel.

Paul is simply saying that if a person is broke, they are under no obligation to give. God accepts a person’s giving based on what they have, He’s not asking for them to give what they don’t have.

So, the bottom line is this; teachers are to study and pray to make sure they have something substantial to offer, because it’s their stewardship, or responsibility. If they’re in it for the money, for (‘filthy lucre’), their motive is wrong and God won’t honor their ministry.

Those in the congregation who appreciate and are grateful for the spiritual food they’re being given have the option to express that gratitude in financial support for the one feeding them. But like the motive being crucial for the one who teaches, it’s also crucial that *giving* be done with the right motive. It should never be done from what Paul calls “compulsion”.

(2 Cor. 9:7) “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart (privately) to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Ok, let’s move into the next two exhortations given to elders;

(1 Pet. 5:3-4) “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”

If you are a pastor, or Bible teacher, or elder (or all three), there is a specific crown as a reward that will given to you, *if* you meet certain conditions.

Peter starts with what you *can't* do; you can't "lord it over those entrusted to you." Pastor Steven Cole does a good job of explaining the danger this poses;

"Some go into ministry because they like the power or status of leadership. I heard a well-known pastor say that he thought that most men in pastoral ministry were insecure and that they were after the affirmation they received from their people. I thought, 'If he's right, we're in big trouble!' A man who goes into the pastorate or who serves as an elder because he wants power is not qualified to serve.

The flock belongs to God and is entrusted to overseers as those who will answer to God. Rather than leading by lording, they are to lead by example. This does not mean that elders can never exercise authority (see Titus 1:11; 2:15). There are times when they must take a stand and say, 'We are not going to allow this practice or this false teaching in this church.' Sometimes they must enforce church discipline or confront members of their congregation. But their normal mode of leadership should be their example of godly living."

To be completely thorough about the responsibility of anyone who teaches others, we'd have to basically cover 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus because that's why those epistles were written. But for sake of time and because we're staying in the context of 1st Peter, I'll be selective in Paul's instructions to Timothy;

(2 Tim. 4:1-4) "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

I'm beginning with these verses because a lot of the 'people-pleasing' pastors of our generation think that not lording over others means never saying anything that might offend someone. Paul obviously didn't believe that. "Convincing, rebuking and exhorting" all have the potential of offending.

Just like we saw earlier in Acts 6 when Peter defines the work of an elder, Paul does the same thing in 1 Tim. 5:17-18;

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall

not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'"

The word "labor" is a little more intense than simply stating it. Here's what the original is; "To be wearied, exhausted, worn out".

Based on my experience in visiting churches in the last few years, it seems like the pastor is way more 'exhausted' with running the activities of the church than in the kind of studying that produces in-depth teaching.

The cliché about contemporary sermons being composed of three points a poem and a prayer seems pretty accurate.

If you ask a pastor why he doesn't spend 30-40 hours a week in prayer and study, he will tell you that he doesn't have time for that; the needs of the church are too great to set aside for that level of study

But if he *did* feed his congregation at the "exhaustion" study level, their needs would be less because they would become more self-sustaining in their relationship with the Lord.

Also, those in the church who are growing under that kind of ministry would see their gifts surface and the members of the church would be meeting each other's needs, which is the way church life is *supposed* to work.

Pastors complain about the 20/80 split in churches (20% of the people are doing 80% of the work). That's because most of the 80% became stagnated as spiritual infants under the teaching ministry of a pastor who is too busy to bring them the food they need for spiritual advance.

Based on what saw we in Acts 6, in the pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Tim. and Titus) and now in 1 Peter, we have a clear picture of the responsibilities of a first century pastor.

If we need to, we can use what we see in these letters to determine whether a pastor we may know is operating in that role.

If you *do* know a pastor, ask him these two questions;

- 1) What is the most exhausting part of your job?
- 2) Of all the hours you work each week, what part of your job takes the majority of those hours?

If he doesn't answer 'studying and praying' to both questions, he's not functioning as a New Testament pastor.

Ok, that was sort of a soapbox – let's get back to 1 Pet. 5. Here's verses 5 through 7;

“Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Humility and submission go together – humility is an attitude that leads to submission to authority, and also the kind of submission that causes us to care for one another. It's considering others more important than ourselves.

There are a lot of misconceptions of humility. Jesus said He was “meek and lowly of heart” – He also turned over the tables and drove the thieves out of the temple in anger.

I was sent this article by David Wilkerson that does an excellent job of helping clarify the real difference between humility and pride.

“Let me distinguish clearly between pride and humility. A humble person is not one who thinks little of himself, hangs his head and says, ‘I'm nothing.’ Rather, he is one who depends wholly on the Lord for everything in every circumstance. He knows the Lord has to direct him, empower him and quicken him and that he's dead without that!

A proud person, on the other hand, is one who may love God in a fashion, but he acts and thinks on his own. At its root, pride is simply independence from God, and the proud person makes decisions based on his own reasoning, skill and abilities. He says, ‘God gave me a good mind, and he expects me to use it. It's silly to ask him for direction in *every* detail of life.’ This person is unteachable because he already knows it all. He might listen to someone who is higher in authority or better known than himself, but not to someone he thinks is inferior.

Not one word a proud person receives is of God! It is impossible for him to judge righteous judgment, impossible to speak God's mind, because the Holy Spirit is not active in him to bear witness to truth. ‘There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. The backslider in heart

will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above.’ (Proverbs 14:12,14, NKJV).

Pride is independence; humility is dependency. The humble Christian is one who makes no move or decision without first seeking counsel from the Lord. Scripture clearly states, ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded’ (James 4:6-8). The Bible says the steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord, but he cannot order the steps of an independent spirit. God wants full control. The humble man will give it to Him.”

Let’s move into the last section of 1 Pet. 5. We’ll start with vs. 8;

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Peter starts by tying our need to be alert and vigilant to the ongoing attempt of the enemy to destroy us.

We’ll need to do some word definitions if we want to see what Peter is warning us about. I’ll move through the Greek meanings fairly quickly, because we need to see how everything flows, but we also need time to make some applications.

“Sober” is to be mentally self-controlled. The word vigilant means to be awake and watchful. There is much more to the meaning of ‘adversary’ and ‘devil’ (diabolos) than we normally think of. The type of work he does; the way he tries to destroy, is actually contained in his names. Here’s what I mean – this is from Kenneth Wuest’s Greek New Testament;

“In classical Greek the meanings include slander, accuse, defame and was used not only of those who bring false charges against a person, but also of those who disseminate the truth, but do so maliciously and with hostility. The word ‘roaring’ in the Greek text speaks of the howl of a beast in fierce hunger.”

So, Peter's saying that in the name adversary and devil we see both his character as well as his approach. Like Paul said in 2 Cor. 2:11; "we are not ignorant of his devices."

We can't afford *not* to be awake and watchful; Satan will always be looking for any opportunity we give him by *not* being those things.

After warning us, Peter tells us to 'resist him' (vs. 9)

"Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

Peter connects the common sufferings of Christians with resisting Satan.

Before we look at why he does that, this is something else we should understand from what Peter is trying to do in this verse; it's from E.W. Kenyon;

"Peter is careful to maintain the due balance between casting our care upon Him, our inherited right in Christ, and the necessity for being sober and vigilant in our pilgrimage. Peter issued an urgent appeal for alertness, painted a vivid picture of the enemy, urged firm resistance in faith and concluded with an encouraging reminder of the sufferings of the brotherhood."

Somehow, all of us, if we want to survive spiritually, have to find the balance between watchfulness and worry. Satan has been positionally defeated at the cross; we are raised above him and unless we are offering him access to our lives through unconfessed sin, our resisting of him will always be successful.

So, on the one hand we have nothing to "worry" about; we can "be anxious for nothing". On the other hand, this doesn't mean we can be passive observers in our pilgrimage (as Kenyon put it).

When Joshua entered Canaan and the battle with the enemy began, he was given the same perfect balance of instruction that Peter gives us. I'll read what the Lord told Joshua and as I do, watch for the parallels between our passage in Peter and what Joshua was told. His enemies were physical; ours are spiritual – but the principle of how we approach our battle is the same;

(Josh. 1:5-9) "Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you. Be determined and confident, for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land which I promised their ancestors. Just

be determined, be confident; and obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go. Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go.”

So, Joshua knew that the Lord was with Him and as long as He didn't neglect God's word, he would not only be safe, he would prevail. But that didn't mean he wouldn't have to fight. There's no place in Christianity for passivity; just as there's no place for the worry or fear we are sometimes tempted to embrace. God can be trusted.

Finally, in vs. 10-11 Peter reassures them that the suffering they are experiencing not only has a very specific goal, but God will make sure that goal is reached; He will complete what He's begun. Here's the verses;

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

As we've seen before, we are called to enter into eternal glory, expressing in and through us, a measure of the glory of Christ formed in us through sharing His suffering.

The word Peter uses for 'suffered' in vs. 10 is the same word he uses for the suffering of Christ in 1 Pet. 2:21. The word *pascho* means; “to undergo an experience or a sensation including painful, difficult circumstances.” One of the authors I read (named Deffenbaugh) tied this into the battle we have with Satan – so he kept it in context for us. Here's what he wrote;

“The very trials which may appear to be the means Satan employs for our destruction are the means God employs for our deliverance and development. Behind the opposition of unbelievers stands Satan seeking to devour us, and behind Satan stands God, certain to perfect and purify us.”

This perfectly matches Peter's encouragement to us. He's not saying we won't have to fight or that the battle won't be intense, he's simply assuring us that God will control everything that happens, so that the outcome will be to our “deliverance and development”.

Job, of course, is the perfect historical example; as was Joseph – as he explained to his brothers in Gen. 50:20;

“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.”

I am well aware that when we are under the pressure of the enemy, it’s incredibly difficult to hang on to the “God will use this for our good” mindset. But that’s part of the battle, maybe the hardest part.

Listen to the way Alexander Maclaren describes grace in action during suffering;

“When surrounded by difficulties, crushed by sorrows, assaulted and battered by all the artillery of temptations, when faint of heart and conscious of one’s own weakness seems to have taken all warmth of feeling out of us, and many defeats have robbed us of hope, — there is one strong tower into which we may run and be safe (Prov. 18:10) The Name of the Lord is a Strong Tower. The thought of his revealed character as the God of all grace, is enough to scatter all the black-winged brood of cares and fears. For that great Name proclaims that his love is inexhaustible. Grace is love exercised to inferior and undeserving persons; and, if he is the God of all grace, boundless love is poured out for the lowliest and foulest. Anything short of such Divine fullness of love would be tired out by our slowness and repeated sin. Impatience steals into the most long-suffering heart, and the most generous hand will shut fast at last when the ragged complainer comes for the hundredth time with the old story of shiftless improvidence and misery, and the old whining petition for help already so often given and squandered. But there is no wearying out *God’s* patient love, and no past misuse of his gifts can ever prompt him to deny us. The God of all grace has grace for all. He works and is not weary. The stream has been pouring for ages with a rush like Niagara, and the flood today is as mighty as at the beginning. It is fed from the eternal fountains in the mountains of God, and cannot cease. Shall we fear to be left to fall before enemies or to be crushed by our sorrows, when we have such an ever-full fountain of grace to draw from? And so, beloved, come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need.”

Peter closes his first epistle with commendations and greetings.

(1 Pet. 5:12-13) “By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of

God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so, does Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

I won't spend time here because these verses are self-explanatory, but did you also have a sense of, I guess, foreboding when you heard Peter give the greeting of the church in Babylon? After studying Revelation and realizing the place Babylon has had in history and will have in the future, it was just a little strange to see Babylon causally mentioned 'in passing' in Peter's letter.

Ok, that completes our study of 1 Peter. In our next study, we will move into Peter's second epistle.