

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY ON HIM, because He cares for you. Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished among your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, *and* ground you. To Him *be* might forever and ever. Amen.

Through Silvanus, our faithful brother as I regard *him*, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and bearing witness that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.  
*1 Peter 5 (LSB)*

Over the past four weeks, we've been working our way through Peter's first letter to the Church with this idea that Peter's own life was radically changed by Jesus Christ. Think about how he was portrayed throughout the Gospel accounts.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe how Peter and his brother, Andrew, left everything to follow Jesus, and they all point out that Peter didn't miss an opportunity to bring that up when it made him look good. Every time I read the passages about the rich young ruler who was told to sell everything and follow Jesus, Peter comes across as a bit of a snob with his humble brag.

And Peter said, "Behold, we have left *all that is* our own and followed You."  
*Luke 18:28 (LSB)*

In Matthew 18:21, we see that he struggled with forgiveness thinking that he'd be off the hook after forgiving someone seven times. In John 13, humility seems to confound him again when Jesus gets down to wash his feet. Matthew and Mark write about the time that Peter thought it would be a good idea to rebuke Jesus. That didn't go over so well, and Jesus rebuked him back pretty harshly, calling him Satan. All four Gospel accounts tell of how sure Peter was about

himself when Jesus told him that he would deny Him three times. I'm reminded of how that turned out every time I'm in line at a drive through and I hear roosters crowing.

Even with all of Peter's "teachable moments," Jesus loved him dearly. He was one of the three disciples that Jesus spent more time with. It was Peter, James, and John who saw Jesus transfigured on the mountain when they went up to pray. And it is the same three who fell asleep when they were supposed to be praying with Jesus before He was betrayed by Judas.

After the resurrection of Christ, Peter was one of two disciples who raced to see the empty tomb. He was with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them multiple times. You'd think that would be enough to get him to start proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' resurrection, but he decides to go fishing instead. If I were him, I can't say that I'd do it any differently. He still had the weight of denying that he even knew Jesus weighing on him. Going out fishing seems like a good way to process through that guilt and shame. Fishing wasn't going to cut it though and it took another interaction with Jesus to work through those issues.

Peter was a part of Jesus' inner circle, and even though he still made some boneheaded mistakes, being that close to Jesus meant that he had more opportunities to learn from Him. It's not until we move out of the Gospel accounts and into Acts that we see any shift in Peter.

In Acts 1:16-17, Peter recounts how Judas had to betray Jesus so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. This is the first clue that Peter's understanding of God's sovereignty has changed. He rebuked Jesus when He foretold His suffering and death; he chopped off the ear of the high priest's slave in the garden when Jesus was being arrested, but sometime between Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he starts to recognize and speak to the greater scope of God's plan.

Now, God's sovereignty is the framework that Peter works from throughout the entire letter that we've been studying. He notes it in the beginning as God's foreknowledge and ends with God's might or dominion. This is important because it helps us understand that Peter wrote this letter to show early Christians that everything from suffering to salvation is a part of God's plan.

So, let me just say a quick prayer. God, would You open Your Word to us today that we might see and receive Your plan for us. Amen.

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

*1 Peter 5:1 (LSB)*

I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder. How many elders do we have in the room? Let me ask it a different way. How many of you have been following Jesus for at least 30 years. That's about how long it's been since Peter started literally following Jesus when he wrote this letter. If you've been following Jesus at least 30 years, would you stand up? To everyone else in the room, these are your elders when it comes to your walk with Christ. Stay standing now, how about 20 years? 10 years? If you're not standing right now, take note of those around you

who are. Get to know them. Become friends with them. I can't express just how important it is to have someone with you who's already navigated the struggles that are bound to come up in your faith journey. If you're standing, make it a point to come along someone who is still seated. You've got a lot to offer them, whether you think so or not. Do you remember what Peter wrote a little earlier in the letter?

...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood...

*1 Peter 2:3-5 (ESV)*

Whether you think Peter is talking about church leaders or simply those who are more advanced in years when he says elders, he's talking about you. If you are a follower of Christ, you are a royal priesthood. You've been commissioned by the blood of the Lamb. It's time to...

shepherd the flock of God among you,  
*1 Peter 5:2 (LSB)*

If you think that shepherding the flock is a job reserved for ordained pastors only, then I'm going to call you out right now as a consumer Christian. God's will for you is not to simply have a get out of jail free card or fire insurance to keep you out of hell. Have you ever left church feeling like you didn't really get anything out of it? Or how about worship. Do you participate in the singing just because it makes you feel good? Are your relationships in church based on what that person has to offer you? What good are friends if you can't use them, right? I know there are people in this room right now who have thought at least one of those things. Maybe even all of them. I know it's true because I've thought each of those things at time.

That might be convicting to you but at the same time, I'm not trying to convince or coerce you into serving or mentoring or anything like that. I'm just trying to point out what God's will is for you the way that Peter has laid it out. Peter used to be a consumer Christian too. He wanted to fit Jesus into his little box of what he thought the Messiah was supposed to be for him. Jesus was supposed to overthrow the oppressive government and establish a new kingdom.

I meet with a group of men who are all older than me on Thursday mornings. Well, at least some Thursday mornings. We don't always meet, and I don't always make it when we are meeting. The topic of being retired came up and one of the guys mentioned that he struggles with feeling like he ought to be doing something with his time. I suggested finding someone who's 10, 15, or 20 years younger and simply becoming a friend to them. That's where what Peter is talking about here starts.

He uses the imagery of a shepherd and a flock of sheep. Jesus used that same imagery.

**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.**  
*John 10:27 (LSB)*

Shepherding starts with time spent. That's it. And what I've learned is that time spent with those younger in their faith leads to conversations that grow us both.

shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; and not for dishonest gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to you, but being examples to the flock.

*1 Peter 5:2-3 (LSB)*

Like I said, I'm not trying to coerce you into overseeing a ministry or mentoring. But I hope that you might feel a desire for this begin to well up inside of you. Peter makes sure to point out here that this is an act of giving. It's not about what you can get out of it or the status you might gain, but simply being an example of becoming more like Christ in your relationships with others in the flock.

When our attitude is in check and we are doing the will of God for the sake of doing the will of God, He does reward us.

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

*1 Peter 5:4 (LSB)*

I mentioned the way consumer Christians approach worship. Singing worship songs because it makes you feel good puts things out of order and eventually leads to "not getting anything out of worship." On the other hand, when we are in right relationship with God, recognizing who He is and who we are in relation to Him, our response is to worship Him. That might lead us to be face down with ugly tears pouring out on the floor or to lift our eyes and hands in joyful celebration of the majesty of God. We don't worship because of what we might get out of it, but that doesn't mean God doesn't have something in store for us to receive from Him when we worship. In the same way, we do not come alongside those younger in the flock for the sake of what we might gain, but God has glory in store for us when we are obedient to His will.

You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders.

*1 Peter 5:5 (LSB)*

This isn't just for men, but I think it's interesting that Peter says "younger men" here. He doesn't say children. Newborn Christians are eager to learn and glean all they can from the elders of the flock. But how quickly we progress from being a newborn believer to a teenage boy who knows everything. I was a teenage boy once and I know less now than I thought I knew back then. Those of you who have been on this walk for a few years may have grown a lot, but don't neglect the wisdom of those who have gone before you. Pastor Bob talked about submission a couple weeks ago. To be subject to your elders is to come under them, submit to the wisdom they have so that you can learn from them and not become stagnant in your faith.

And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

*1 Peter 5:5*

Humility is not natural. It's something we have to put on. And it's something that God wills for all of us. Where there is humility, there is grace. Pride leaves no room for grace. Not only that, but it even puts you in opposition to God. If that's a place you want to be, then I want to steer clear of you. Peter is quoting from Proverbs 3:34 here:

Toward the scorers he is scornful,  
but to the humble he gives favor.

Now, I want to point something out right here. It goes back to the idea that Peter is working from a framework of the sovereignty of God. There is a literary function often used in Scripture called *inclusio*. When you're studying verse by verse like we have been, it can be hard to recognize. That's why I read the entire chapter to start the sermon today. I mentioned earlier that Peter starts the letter with God's foreknowledge and ends it with His dominion or might. The whole letter could be considered a form of *inclusio*.

When a portion of text is sandwiched in between two of the same words or concepts, it's meant to show us that the middle of the sandwich should be understood through the lens of what is surrounding it. That's why I started off saying that this letter is written from the framework of an understanding of God's sovereignty.

So, let's look at verses 6-11 as one piece.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, *CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY ON HIM*, because He cares for you. Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished among your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, *and* ground you. To Him *be* might forever and ever. Amen.

*1 Peter 5:6-11 (LSB)*

The mighty hand of God, and His might (or dominion as ESV interprets it) bookend this passage. Within His sovereignty, we see His character on display: He cares for you and will exalt you at the right time; He will restore you because He is the God of all grace. The implication of this *inclusio* is that the scheme of the adversary in verse 8 and the suffering of all believers in verse 9 fall under the sovereignty of God.

It may sound like a cop-out, but I cannot give you an answer to why God allows the devil to scheme and prowl or why God allows the suffering of His people under His sovereignty. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares Yahweh.  
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.  
*Isaiah 55:8-9 (LSB)*

There are certain things that are hard to fathom how they fit under the sovereignty of God who is perfectly good all the time. But His ways and thoughts are higher than mine, so I have to trust that His ways and thoughts are better too. What I can say though is that this short passage gives us three things to focus on within His sovereignty.

**Be humbled.**

**Be on guard.**

**Trust the process.**

Let these simple statements sink in.

**Be humbled.**

**Be on guard.**

**Trust the process.**

**Be humbled.** That may seem like a strange way to put it, but there's a reason I'm not simply saying "be humble." When Peter wrote "humble yourselves" he used a passive voice, which means we and the original readers of the letter would read it as to have humility applied to them. Humility is a gift from God.<sup>1</sup> We aren't necessarily being humiliated by God in the way we understand that word today, but we are to be humbled under the His mighty hand.<sup>2</sup>

Humility is not thinking less of ourselves in a self-loathing manner but thinking rightly about our position before our Creator. We could never be greater than He is; neither are we so insignificant that He cares nothing for us. In fact, verse 7 even tells us to cast all our anxieties on Him *because He cares for us*. To recognize the coexistence of God's omnipotence and the way He perfectly, unfailingly loves and care for us positions us right where we are supposed to be: under His mighty hand.

Do you ever feel stressed out or weighed down by anxiety? Believe it or not, I can feel quite anxious on Sunday mornings before church starts. There is a lot pressure to deliver the Word of God in a way that helps us all move towards Christ. And as a worship leader, I am keenly aware of how my pride can easily take over and hinder rather than encourage worship. Sometimes that weight gets heavier throughout the week of preparations, but something shifts during our worship rehearsal. It's not simply a time to practice the music. It's a time to practice being in

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<sup>1</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Abington New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), eBook, Concluding Exhortation (5:1-11).

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 5:6.

the presence of God. Through ascribing worth to our God through song, I find myself being humbled in His presence. It is that humility that affords me the opportunity to take that weight from my own shoulders and cast it upon God. It shows me a glimpse of just how much He cares for me. That anxiety may seem trivial compared to what you may be going through but take heart; God cares deeply for you. No matter what you are dealing with, you can give it to Him.

The problem is that pride gets in the way of letting go. Pride gets in the way of grace. When I am proud of the work that I've done, I start to see myself in the wrong light. I focus on the work that I put in. All that pride turns to anxiety when it comes to crunch time when I still think it depends on me. The reality is that God guided me through it all and it is His Word that I spent time soaking in. It's God who carries the burden of drawing people nearer to Himself, not me. So, I must be humbled.

What anxieties are you holding onto that you need to let go of? Does pride make you feel bound to them? Be humbled. Casting your anxieties upon the Lord is an act of humility itself. Allowing worry to captivate you is a form of submitting to pride.<sup>3</sup>

We also need to **be on guard**. When my children were younger, I used to never let them out of my sight when we were in public or near any body of water. Even now, I try keep watch as much as possible in unfamiliar territory. Isaiah and I served at the Let's Go Youth Rally in Olivehurst yesterday. I had to leave before the cleanup, but Isaiah stayed behind to help and I gave him one instruction. Don't help with lowering the speakers. I know how dangerous that can be with the type of setup, so I wanted to make sure he was protected in my absence.

We watched a documentary recently about Alex Honnold who free solo climbed El. There's a scene where he was climbing with his girlfriend and on his way down from setting the top rope for the rest of them she wasn't watching the end of his rope and it slipped through the brake. He fell a few meters to the ground and sustained compression fractures on two vertebrae.<sup>4</sup>

The ropes used in climbing are passive tools used for safety. They aren't actively trying to destroy climbers, but it is imperative for them to always keep watch. How much more important is it to be on guard against an enemy who's actively seeking to devour us like a roaring lion?

But hold on a second. You might be asking, wasn't the devil already defeated by Christ through His death and resurrection? Why do we still have to watch out for him? This is an example of the *already and not yet* nature of the Kingdom of God. The enemy has been defeated and Jesus

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, ed. David S. Dockery and Kenneth A. Matthews (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 209, eBook.

<sup>4</sup> "Alex Honnold's Summer Injuries Result of Rope Climbing Accident," [gripped.com](https://gripped.com/news/alex-honnolds-summer-injuries-result-of-rope-climbing-accident), <https://gripped.com/news/alex-honnolds-summer-injuries-result-of-rope-climbing-accident>.

holds the keys to death and Hades,<sup>5</sup> but the devil still prowls around like a lion.<sup>6</sup> We've got to always be alert and on guard, and that starts with a sound mind.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us to be sober-minded and constantly ready:

Be of sober *spirit*, be watchful.  
*1 Peter 5:8 (LSB)*

The word that is translated as sober spirit or sober-minded can also mean well-balanced or self-controlled. Resisting the devil's schemes takes some level of mental acuity. We can't simply say a prayer to accept Christ and expect everything to be easy.

In Romans 12:2, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. That renewing takes work. It's interesting to note here that Peter does not encourage us to wage war against our adversary. Instead, we are to stand firm on solid faith against the attacks that will come from the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

But resist him, firm in the faith  
*1 Peter 5:9 (LSB)*

After Peter's instructions to be on guard with a sharp mind, he encourages us to stand firm in our faith as we resist the devil by reminding us that we are not alone in the struggle.

Christians around the world are in the same battle and they experience the same kinds of trials and sufferings that we do. When I look at what Christians are enduring in other parts of the world, the Christian walk seems relatively easy here in America. Knowing their suffering helps put things in perspective for me and gives me strength to press on through my own struggles.

Put yourself in the shoes of a Christian in the middle east who is persecuted by militant Muslims for their faith in Christ. Or imagine yourself in an impoverished village in Africa. It's probably hard for them to imagine that Christians in wealthy parts of the world like ours are enduring the kinds of suffering they are.<sup>8</sup> Take heart and know that you are not alone. Be humbled under God's mighty hand knowing that He has spared you from the suffering that some of your brothers and sisters in other parts of the world are enduring.

Peter also reminds us that the suffering we experience is temporary, much like Paul does in 2 Corinthians:

For our momentary, light affliction is working out for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things

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<sup>5</sup> Revelation 1:18.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 5:8.

<sup>7</sup> Dennis R. Edwards, *1 Peter: The Story of God Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 204, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Zondervan, *Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2006), eBook, 1 Peter.



which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

*2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (LSB)*

Finally, we must **trust the process**.

Difficulties in life's journey are inevitable. Yes, God desires the best for His people and blesses us in this life, but struggles, trials, difficulty, and/or suffering are all a part of the deal as well. But that's not the destination for this journey we are on. Verse 6 in our passage today says that God will lift us up from our place of humility...

...He may exalt you at the proper time  
*1 Peter 5:6 (LSB)*

...and Peter comes back to that in verse 10:

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, strengthen, confirm, *and* ground you.  
*1 Peter 5:10 (LSB)*

Anyone who has been called in Christ can put their hope in the God of all grace. If you've been broken and torn down, God will restore you. The shaken and abandoned will be made firm. If you're weak, God will give you strength. And the lost will be found by Him. The suffering is only temporary. The glory is eternal. The God of all grace is sovereign over salvation<sup>9</sup>, life, death, and everything in between, even over our suffering.

To Him *be* might forever and ever. Amen.  
*1 Peter 5:11 (LSB)*

Under God's mighty hand, humility is turned into exaltation. After suffering for a little while, the God of all grace brings restoration. Trust the process. Endure the ridicule that is thrown at you because you are a Christian. Persevere through the pain and suffering. You're not alone, and God has a better plan for you.

He has called you to His eternal glory in Christ.  
*1 Peter 5:10 (LSB)*

Isn't it humbling to know that God cares so much about us that He lifts us up from our humility and invites us to share in the glory of Christ? He is involved and cares deeply about every detail of our lives; sovereign over everything from our suffering to our salvation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Williams, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 178, eBook.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Ruffner and Russell L Huizing, "A Trinitarian Leadership Model: Insights from the Apostle Peter," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10.2 (2016): 40.

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