

1st PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 5:1-14

Lesson #16

Introduction

This is lesson 16 in our first Peter Bible study, and its covering chapter 5, verses 1 through 14. With this we should complete our first Peter Bible study, and if the Lord wills we will move into second Peter next week. If you recall our study from chapter 4 last week, you'll remember that this chapter continued Peter's theme of preparation of the saints for pending and escalating persecutions. Peter reminded the saints that our calling and election is unto sanctification and godliness of behaviors, regardless of the surroundings or situations. The children of God are called to walk in a manner that's worthy of their calling in every situation, because we are the Royal priesthood of God, and are called to display, by our own actions, the moral and virtuous excellencies of Him, who by His grace, called us out of our former darkness and into His marvelous light.

In chapter 4 Peter reminded us that the end of all things is near, so we should remain sound in our judgment and alert in our behaviors. We should be ready at any time to give a gentle and respectful explanation to anyone who asks us why we believe the things that we do. Peter started out that chapter with the words that just as Christ had suffered and died in the flesh, likewise we should arm ourselves with that same resolve. I cannot see Peter lasting very long as a twenty-first century televangelist. Can you even imagine the reaction that one would get if he went up to the podium and pronounced to the congregation that they should begin making themselves ready to suffer and die on behalf of the name of Jesus Christ, because the culture, and the government is making deliberate preparations for the commencement of a campaign whereby the authorized law enforcement agencies may be utilized to utterly extinguish the name of Jesus Christ and the Christian religion from the face of the earth. And yet that's exactly what Peter did in this epistle, just as the apostle Paul did in many of his, especially Thessalonians. How's that for seeker friendly? I guess Peter and Paul didn't get that memo.

We went on to discuss the alarming similarities of that time period with the cultural and legal similarities of our own time. It's interesting to note that the contemporary church is trying so very hard to strike a friendly working relationship with the world at just the precise time when the world is thoroughly disgusted with the church, and is tired of putting up with it. One doesn't have to be a prophet to predict the outcome of this endeavor. The only way the world will tolerate the church is if the church is willing to refashion itself to be like the world, which most of the churches are tripping all over themselves to do. But this shouldn't surprise us in the least, if indeed Peter is correct, and the end of all things is near, because the apostle Paul described this time in intricate detail in second Timothy chapter 4, verses one through five. Indeed, all things are progressing just exactly as planned by God, and we should be encouraged, and living in imminent expectation of Christ's calling us to himself at any moment. Jesus said to pay close attention to the signs of the times, and when they all indicated as He prophesied, then we should begin to look up, because our redemption draws near. (Lk 21:28)

With this as our glorious hope, we will gladly live and persevere in godliness and righteousness, so as to be thoroughly ready at every moment. For, although we may have been appointed to suffer for the name of our Savior, nevertheless we were not appointed unto the final wrath of God, but to receive salvation from that wrath through Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Ths 5:9) And based on this knowledge, the apostle Paul wrote that he did not consider the sufferings of this present age to be worthy of comparison to the glory that would be revealed to us at Christ's return. (Rom 8:18)

Right now, at least for us in the West, these seem to be little more than encouraging words of literature. Abstract principles that apply to somebody else, or some other time. Although to much of the rest of the world, this is stark day-to-day reality. But according to the signs of the times, and the indications of Scripture, there appears to be perilous days ahead for all those who proclaim Jesus Christ as the only way to God, and affirm the divine authority of the holy Scriptures in all matters of life and practice. With this as the background, Peter has been instructing us as to how we must live and behave in the midst of such circumstances, and he's about to finish those instruction in this last chapter. So let's continue now with his final instructions of this epistle:

Christian Expectations & Behaviors

Verses 1-4:

1 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, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NASB)

Now Peter turns his attention specifically to the elders of the church. By elders he means what we now call pastors and ministers. He exhorts them as a fellow elder and also as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Peter's telling them that he's an eyewitness of the ministry and sufferings of Christ Jesus, so what he's telling them isn't just something he heard about, but something he saw and experienced himself. And even goes one step further and says he was a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

This can only be referring to the Lord's Transfiguration on the mountain, where Peter and James and John were taken up on top of a mountain and the flesh body of the Lord Jesus Christ was momentarily peeled back to expose His divine glory, and His face shone like the sun and His garments were as white as light, and Moses and Elijah appeared there speaking with Him. Peter saw this with his own eyes, and heard the voice from heaven declare "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him!" and now he himself testifies to the holy and divine nature of Jesus Christ.

So now, based on his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and an eyewitness to both His sufferings and His glory, Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock that's among them. To exercise their oversight position not as a matter of compulsion but rather voluntarily, because it is the will of God and the desire of their own heart. And not by any means for petty gains they think they might get from it, but rather with eagerness to serve the Lord and care for the flock entrusted to them. And furthermore not as lording it over those allotted to their charge, as some kind of dictator, but rather proving to be examples to the flock by their own humility, gentleness, godliness, and faithfulness. The shepherd of the Lord leads by example, and as such answers to a very high calling. It is unlikely that the flock will rise to a level that exceeds the shepherd, so those who accept such a position need to know in advance the sacrifices and expectations upon their lives. This is not a position to be taken lightly, and those who accept will answer to a much more strenuous evaluation by the Lord Jesus. Great and continuous are the sacrifices of those who choose to serve as elders of the church, as shepherds of the flock of Jesus Christ, but as Peter says, when the chief Shepherd appears those who persevered and served honorably will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Verses 5-7:

5 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.

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:5-7 (NASB)

In these verses Peter turns his attention to the younger men and those who are not elders. He tells them to be subject to their elders and leaders. In other words acknowledge the authority of the elders and seek to be a help and not a hindrance. Ask all the questions you wish, but not for the purpose of contention or strife, but for the purpose of learning and knowing the will of God and doing it.

If your elders have proven themselves trustworthy, and if what they preach is consistent with the word of God, then subject yourselves to them and to their teachings as you would to Christ himself, because they are appointed by Him on your behalf, and to your benefit. Good and faithful shepherds, that hold firmly to the words of truth, are harder to find than you might think, so if you have one be thankful for him, and if you don't then keep on looking until you do, because you cannot afford to follow a false prophet or a lazy shepherd.

Peter says that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” So we should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt us at the proper time. And this was the example that Peter used in his earlier verses concerning Christ’s suffering and dying on our behalf so that He might bring us to God. The Lord Jesus first humbled Himself under the mighty hand of His Father, so that in the appropriate time He might be exalted to His position as Lord over all. He goes on to say that we should cast all of our anxiety on Him, (Christ Jesus) because He cares for us. Please note that he does not say that we should not have anxiety, because who would argue that the Lord Jesus didn’t have anxiety as He prayed to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane, but rather that we cast that anxiety upon the Lord Jesus, because we know that He cares for us.

The thought here is not that the anxiety can be cast away entirely, but that we can offset it, and make it bearable, by directing our attention upon the Lord Jesus and His love for us, as Christ himself did with His words to his Father when He said “yet not my will but thine be done.” Just as Christ Jesus could cast off His anxiety over the coming crucifixion, and lay it upon His Father, because He never doubted His Father’s love, likewise we may cast off our anxiety onto the Lord Jesus Christ because we do not, for one second, doubt His eternal love for us.

Verses 8-11:

8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:8-11 (NASB)

And now Peter calls on the church to be of sober spirit and to be on the alert. On the alert against what, you might ask? Peter says your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Satan and his demonic army are those invisible principalities and powers, that seek our harm. Paul wrote: *12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph 6:12) It is against these powers, these rulers and authorities and spiritual forces of wickedness that Peter says we must be sober and alert, for our enemy is real and alive and malevolent, and seeks ever to do us harm by enticing us into sin and disobedience. It is obvious that the Lord has granted to these malevolent creatures the limited ability to tempt mankind through the weakness of his flesh.

But Peter says straight out that we are commanded to resist these temptations of the flesh, and persecutions of the body, firm in our faith. And he comforts us by telling us that all of our other Christian brothers in the world are suffering these very same situations. And even better yet, that after we have suffered these things for a little while, the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us. Just as He did with His Son I might add. And if the final outcome is that of confirming, strengthening, perfecting, and establishing of ourselves into the eternal kingdom of God, then how can we not reply, just as our Savior did “not our will Father, but Thy will be done.” We cast all of our fears and anxieties onto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us.

Verses 12-14:

12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

1 Peter 5:12-14 (NASB)

Now Peter’s just about to wrap up his letter, and has only one last comment to make. He says that through the faithful brother Silvanus he has written them this letter both exhorting and testifying that everything he has said in it is the true grace of God. He has not contrived this whole thing in his mind, he didn’t receive it secondhand from somebody else, he was a first-hand eyewitness, both to the sufferings and to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore if everything he has told them is the truth, and this is the true and unique grace of God, then there is only one last thing to say – stand firm in it! **Stand firm in it** is Peter’s capstone on this epistle.

If it's true then do it, if it's true then believe it, if it's true then persevere in it to the end, regardless of the cost, and he's already told us that the cost could even be our lives. This is what the Lord had told him many years earlier, and now he saw the reality of it looming near on the horizon. He understands that the Lord wasn't exaggerating, or just using hyperbole to make a point when he told them the potential cost of genuine discipleship. When the Lord told them to follow him that's exactly what he meant. The Lord told them that if anyone wishes to be his disciple they must take up their own cross and follow him. And now Peter has just affirmed that message in this epistle.

Conclusion:

Knowing full well the nature of the message that he was going to deliver to the saints in his epistle, and the solemn charge that he was going to give them to continue to obey the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of any and all situations, it was incumbent upon him, and apparently the intention of the Holy Spirit as well, to preface the message with words that would explain and encourage the saints to accept such frightening things. So now let's revisit those words of encouragement and promise that make this whole epistle comprehensible and palatable. Those words that make anything we may have to suffer acceptable in our sight. It is for these these following words, which I'm about to read, that we are willing to persevere to the end:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

1 Peter 1:1-21 (NASB)

To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen

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