

XIII. The God of All Grace and Glory

March 1/3/4, 2021

1 Peter 5:1-11

Aim: To live humbly within the church community by His grace, alertly in the world with faithfulness, and expectantly in hope for God's glory.

A. Instructions for God's Shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Gardner: The opening verses of this chapter are most poignant. Peter had watched Christ suffer during His trial before the high priest in Jerusalem and he had fled the scene (Jn. 18:12-27). Later, though, Jesus showed him great mercy and gave him immense encouragement for his future ministry by offering him once again the challenge to 'Follow me!' and by saying, 'Feed my sheep' (Jn. 21:15-19). Peter had then been filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and gone on to have an amazing ministry in different parts of the Roman Empire. Now toward the end of his life, Peter can say with confidence that he is *one who will also share in the glory to be revealed*. He is confident of his forgiveness and that, in the power of God's Spirit, he has been able to fulfill his calling. He has fed the sheep and he has pastored faithfully. Now it is his turn to exhort the elders of these churches to do the same with sheep who are under their care. This shepherding will be absolutely vital in a church which is going to see increasing levels of persecution. The elders will have a duty spiritually to shepherd their congregations through such times, and they will be responsible to ensure that the churches remain strong and faithful and unified against these assaults.

Gardner: Earlier in 4:17 Peter had spoken of judgment beginning with the house of God.... The leaders and shepherds of God's people hold a very privileged position in the church of God, but with those privileges goes awesome responsibility. When the shepherds fail and end up leading God's people astray, God's judgment is swift and clear, and the biblical warnings are numerous. Malachi 1-2 paints the most fearful picture of leaders who have gone right astray themselves and so are leading the people astray. God's word of condemnation on them is fearful. So, knowing the times in which they live, Peter is most concerned that the pastors and leaders, the elders, are truly serving the Lord and overseeing the people as they should.

1. Relationship (5:1)

¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

McKnight: Peter begins by defining his personal relationship to the elders, which serves as the basis for his exhortations. He is *a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed*. He cites three traits they have in common: 1) they are all elders (Peter uses a rare Greek word, *sumpresbuteros*); 2) they are all witnesses of Christ's sufferings (the *sym-* is not carried over to the term 'witness' but is implicit because there is only one article connecting the two nouns: he is a 'fellow-elder' and -witness. It follows, then, that the same relationship pertains to 'partaker' as well.); and 3) they will all partake of the future glory.

a) Elder (5:1a)

¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder...

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MacArthur: *Therefore* relates back to the fact that this epistle’s recipients were suffering persecution (4:12-19) and being attacked for righteousness’ sake. That reality led Peter to *exhort the elders* to shepherd their troubled, beleaguered sheep. *Exhort* (*parakaleō*) means literally ‘to call alongside,’ or in the general sense, ‘to encourage or compel someone in a certain direction.’ The related noun is often associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cp. Jn. 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

Doriani: The church needs stalwart shepherd leaders in such times. (Although this turn of thought is not explicit, 1 Peter 5:1 does start with *oun*, ‘so’ or possibly ‘therefore.’ The construction points to a thought process. The church needs leaders for a reason.) Elders should not hesitate to lead the church, even though they might make themselves a target for persecution. In their willingness to suffer, Peter stands with Jesus and, calling himself a *fellow elder*, invites church leaders into solidarity with him. Strong and steady hands are essential during a crisis.

Helm: Chapter 5 opens with the word *So*—or literally ‘therefore.’ This shows us beyond a shadow of a doubt that Peter fully intends for us to connect 5:1-5 with what came before. To put it as clearly as possible, his exhortation to elders is made in light of what he has just said on judgment.

(1) Elders

MacArthur: Here Peter directs the appeal to *the elders*, who are the Lord’s appointed and gifted leaders of the church. There are three New Testament terms used interchangeably to refer to these men: elder (*presbuterion*; cp. 1 Tim. 5:19; 2 Jn. 1:3; 3 Jn. 1), bishop or overseer (*episkopos*; cp. 2:25; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7), and pastor (*poimēn*; cp. Eph. 4:11). *Elder* emphasizes the man’s spiritual maturity necessary for such ministry, and in many Protestant churches it is the official title chosen for the office. *Bishop* or *overseer*, states the general responsibility of guardianship. *Pastor* is the word *shepherd* and expresses the priority duty of feeding or teaching the truth of God’s Word.... The first and obvious point to note here is that the Holy Spirit affirms that such spiritual leadership and responsibility for the church belongs to *elders*. That is unmistakable and consistent in the New Testament books dealing with the church.... It is significant that Peter uses the plural, *elders*, in reference to this ministry, the term always appears in the plural in the New Testament, affirm that the office was designed for a plurality of men. A singular usage of the word in reference to church leaders occurs only in such instances as when the apostle John calls himself ‘the elder’ (2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1) or Peter here calls himself *a fellow elder* and when instruction is given about an accusation against a specific elder (1 Tim. 5:1, 19).

Doriani: Elders (*presbuteroi*) do possess authority over the congregation. *Elder* was the customary term for a community leader in the Old Testament and in the Judaism of the Hellenistic age.... First, no Christian leader is self-qualified, morally or spiritually. No one deserves to lead the church. Jesus forgives, appoints, and qualifies his apostles and elders. Second, the core of an elder’s qualifications is the love of Jesus, both experienced and returned. The love of Jesus creates the essential desire to lead and care for God’s people. Despite the threat of persecution, leaders do so *because you are willing*, as Peter puts it (5:2). Elders must also hold to the faith with a clear conscience. They should be apt to teach and lead. They should be tested and prove faithful. They must have godly character. They must care for people inside and outside their church. They should lead their own families well and so gain a good reputation (Acts 20:17-35);

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1 Th. 5:12-15; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-19; Heb. 13:17). But above all, they are beloved of God and must love God in return.

(2) Fellow Elder

Gardner: Peter's own experience of abject failure as he watched the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent restoration and forgiveness enables him to come right alongside the elders of these churches. Probably both because of his desire to be humble and his desire to come alongside them, Peter does not appeal to his apostolic authority as he did in 1:1. Rather, he calls himself *a fellow elder*.

MacArthur: Peter includes some compelling motivation in this exhortation for leaders to *shepherd*. First, the respected apostle humbly identified with them, calling himself *a fellow elder*. Rather than take advantage of their respect for him as an apostle and elevate himself, he empathized with their task as one who understood the challenges and difficulties inherent in shepherding.

McKnight: That Peter calls himself *a fellow elder* is both a statement of modesty (he is also an apostle; cp. 1:1) and sympathy. As an elder, he knows both the temptations these elders encounter and the joys. More importantly, he knows the essence of the calling he needs to spell out in 5:2-3. While it may be argued that Peter condescends to their level, it is more likely that he is elevating their ministries and incorporating their work into his.

Dorani: We know that Jesus Himself appointed Peter as an apostle and herald of the gospel, that Peter was one of the inner three, and that he was often a spokesman for the disciples. Yet with touching modesty, he calls himself *a fellow elder* rather than 'apostle.' He locates himself with that band of elders who labor in the church. He stresses his equality with others and his empathy with their position, not his supremacy or even his authority.

b) Witness (5:1b)

...and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...

Gardner: As Peter mentions being *a witness of Christ's sufferings* he may be thinking of what he actually witnessed all those years before as Jesus died on the cross. Yet here he is fully identifying with the elders to whom he is writing who were clearly not eye-witnesses, so Peter is probably using the word *witness* in the way we would today. When we speak to someone of Christ and His death on the cross, we too are witnesses. In that sense Peter and the fellow elders are one: they all witness to Jesus' death for sin.

MacArthur: As another motivation, Peter reminded them that he was a *witness of the sufferings of Christ*. That he had seen the suffering and risen Christ affirmed the reality of his apostolic identity (Lk. 6:12-16; cp. Acts 1:12-17) and gave him authority. *Witness (martus)* has a twofold meaning: one who personally saw and experienced something, and one who testified to what he saw. Because so many who gave testimony to their experiences with Christ were killed, the term *martyred* came to refer to one who was killed for being a Christian witness (cp. Mt. 16:24-25; 24:9; Rev. 6:9; 20:4). In Peter's case, his bring a *witness* to the sufferings of Jesus along with his fellow apostles, and being commissioned to proclaim those sufferings, to declare the gospel message (cp. Lk. 24:45-48; Acts 22:15). Made him a trustworthy source to encourage the elders to their duty.

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McKnight: As a *witness* to the sufferings of Christ (some argue Peter means ‘eyewitness’ here; however, as others have argued, he had in mind one who testifies about the sufferings of Christ in its saving and exemplary benefits and who participates in that suffering through experiences), Peter can appeal to them to endure hardship, suffering, and persecution because of the example of Jesus (2:18-25; 3:18; 4:1, 13). That is, Peter and the other elders both preach the significance of the sufferings of Jesus (as Peter has admirably done) and endure such sufferings.

Doriani: Peter is a *witness of Christ’s sufferings*. Peter heard the words of Jesus and beheld His deeds, from the beginning (Acts 1:21), by the appointment of Jesus (Mk. 3:14-16). He stood at Jesus’ side, both watching events and hearing Jesus’ explanation of them, so Peter, in turn, could declare both what happened and what it meant.... He is a witness in the secondary sense that he *testified* to Jesus’ suffering. Thus, Peter partially shares the position of elders who proclaim the work of Jesus by drawing on the eye-witness testimony of others. In this limited sense, all elders are witnesses alongside the apostles.

c) Partaker (5:1c)

as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

Gardner: Like the elders to whom he writes, he *will share in the glory* when Christ returns. Again the thought of suffering and Christ’s suffering in particular, immediately brings to mind that suffering leads to glory for those who are the Lord’s. What is true for Christ is true for His people.

MacArthur: Peter’s mention of future glory motivates by anticipation. As one who was a *partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed*, Peter could offer the other elders the genuine hope of an eternal reward for their faithful service. *The glory that is to be revealed* looks at the return of Christ (cp. 1:7-9; 4:7, 12-13; ...) when He comes in full expression of His glory to destroy the ungodly, reward His own, and establish His kingdom forever. Peter says he is a *partaker (koinōnos)* also in that ultimate blessing, indicating that so are the elders. That believers share in eternal glory with the Lord is the essence of their hope (5:10).

McKnight: Since Jesus was vindicated by God, he knows that he, like all the faithful elders, is someone *who will also share* (some argue that Peter is alluding to his experience of the Transfiguration—cp. Mt. 17:6; 2 Pe. 1:16-21. However, the glory he describes here is something future.) *in the glory to be revealed*. The apostle appears to be drawing again from the important connection he has made between suffering and being glorified (cp. 4:13), and he waits for the prize of the elder (5:4).

Doriani: Further Peter is a *partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed*. So Peter stands beside the church’s elders, not above them. All witness to Jesus and wait to participate in Jesus’ glory. From the position of *fellow elder*, he exhorts the elders of the church. This is no condescension, no rhetorical subterfuge. He is not acting as though his fellow elders were his peers; he is elevating them to His level. All witness to Christ. All share in His sufferings and glory, for Jesus’ life is a pattern for ours, as Peter has said before (2:21ff.).

2. Role (5:2a)

²...*shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight...*

McKnight: Having established the common traits of all elders, Peter turns to the *exhortation* itself. It is comprised of a *general exhortation* and several *specific instances* of that general

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exhortation.... These specific instances begin with a general term (*serving as overseers*) and move to three illustrations that contain both a negative and a positive point.

Doriani: This compressed statement describes the duty, manner, and motives of godly leaders.

a) *Shepherd* (5:2a)

²...*shepherd the flock of God that is among you...*

Gardner: Peter exhorts them, *be shepherds of God's flock*, Just as these churches did not belong to Peter, so the flock that these elders have been called to oversee is not *their* flock. This again stresses the huge responsibility that belongs to church elders, for they oversee what is *God's*. The command recalls Jesus' command to Peter: 'Take care of (literally, *shepherd*) my sheep.' Peter is handing on the reins. A new generation must now be faithful to the task that has kept Peter occupied for years. They too must recognize that it is God who placed the church under *their* care. Their work is to be overseers.

MacArthur: This text clearly states that elders have the most serious, delegated stewardship, to *shepherd* not their own flock, but *the flock of God*. Jesus Christ came to earth to redeem His church. After He ascended back to heaven, He sent His Spirit to empower His church with the necessary spiritual gifts and gifted men to shepherd the flock to Christlikeness. And the fact that Christ purchased that flock with His own blood (1:18-19) emphasizes the church's value to the Lord. In form, the term rendered *flock* here (*poimnion*) is a diminutive, a term of endearment, further stressing the preciousness of the church.

McKnight: Elders are responsible to shepherd God's flock. Throughout the Bible, and mostly because Israel was composed of agrarian communities, the relationship of leaders to their charges was describe metaphorically as a shepherd-like relationship. As shepherds cared for their flocks, so ought the leaders of Israel to care for Israelites. This is all rooted in the description of God as a Shepherd to His people. Beside the well-known Psalm 23 (which concerns the Lord's relationship to David), there are the important uses of this image in Isaiah 40:11 (God-Israel), Jeremiah 23:1-4 (Israel's corrupt shepherds will be replaced by good shepherds), Ezekiel 34:1-10 (God will rescue His people from selfish shepherds), Zechariah 11:4-18 (a caring shepherd is replaced by a worthless, uncaring shepherd), Matthew 9:25-28 (Jesus appoints new shepherds for His people, John 10:1-18 (Jesus is he good shepherd), and John 21:15-17 (Peter is to be a shepherd). Peter exhorts his fellow shepherds to tend to the flock that God has appointed to them. What he has in mind is almost certainly the role that individual leaders played in a given house church—to tend to that house church as a group assigned to them by God. Without question, Peter ends any sense of possession by stating that it is *God's* flock, not theirs.

Doriani: First, they willingly shepherd and watch over the flock. In the agrarian world, everyone knew that sheep stray, find trouble, and cannot extricate themselves from it. Unless they receive constant care and oversight, they perish. Psalm 23 pictures the Lord as a shepherd to His people. In John 10, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, the Lord who feeds His sheep, seeks the lost, gathers the scattered, and heals the wounded. Then He commissions men to become shepherds under Him. God told David, 'You will shepherd my people Israel' (2 Sam. 5:2). Jesus commanded Peter to be a shepherd, and now Peter commands elders to be shepherds. What the Lord did for them, they must do for others.... Yet Peter first says that the people are *God's* flock. We are, above all, *God's* flock. That flock is under the care of elders and shepherds who watch

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out for and prevent trouble. We should take comfort that the flock belongs to God, not to man, for if we falter, God is the Chief Shepherd and will never forsake His people.

Sproul: The purpose of the bishop is not to look at the flock and find the faults of the sheep, but rather, to shepherd the sheep. The image in Scripture of the shepherd, which is drawn from the work of Israelite shepherds, finds its zenith in Jesus' declaration of Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. His sheep know His voice (Jn. 10:27)... Peter says that those of us in positions of ministry are to be shepherds of God's flock. The sheep do not belong to these shepherds; they belong to God (cp. Jn. 21:17).

b) Overseer (5:2a)

...exercising oversight...

MacArthur: To the key question of how elders are to shepherd, Peter provides both positive and negative and answers. *Exercising oversight* actually translates a single Greek word, *episkopeō*, which literally means 'to have scope over,' or 'to look upon.' The noun is *episkopos* ('bishop' or 'overseer'; cp. 1 Tim. 3:1). Its clear connotation here in this first positive answer is that shepherds must watch over the sheep to assess their condition so as to lead, guard, and feed them.

McKnight: Peter goes on to list, in contrasting pairs, the *specific instances* of what shepherding ought to involve and not involve. It begins with an expression that both resumes what 5:2a has said and carries the notion of shepherding further: *servicing as overseers*. ('Overseers' translates the Greek term *episkopos*, another popular term for church leaders in the earliest churches—see, e.g., Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7.)

Dorani: The phrase *exercising oversight* translates the single participle *episkopountes*, which does not appear in all early manuscripts. But most do include it, and there is no convincing reason to doubt that it is original.

Sproul: Here we see the bishop as an overseer, a superintendent. The term bishop (*episkopos*) has a common Greek root that is intensified by the prefix *epi*. From the root, *scopis*, we get the English word *scope*. A telescope or microscope is an instrument we use to look at things. *Episkopos* means 'to look at something with the most careful scrutiny.' The verb form *episkein*, is translated in the New Testament as 'to visit.' ... From the word *episkopos* we get the concept of 'supervisor.' The Latin word *vision* is involved here; supervisors are overseers.

Helm: An elder must be a model of Christian maturity through godly character. He must protect the flock through selfless service. He must feed the flock by expounding God's Word. He must express his love for Christ by his love for God's people. In short, Peter summarizes his directive with two words in the middle of verse 2: elders fulfill their role as shepherds of God's flock by *exercising oversight*.

3. Readiness (5:2bc-3)

...not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Gardner: Jesus is described as the *Chief Shepherd* in verse 4, and this helps us to understand what the task of the elders is in overseeing a church. In effect, they are to watch over and lead the people in the way Christ would do, if He were physically present among them. Peter mentions two specific aspects of this oversight here. They are to be *eager to serve* and they are

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to be *examples to the flock*.... Peter has already exhorted the churches to exhibit a community life full of love and hospitality and lived without grumbling (4:8-10). This was the life Peter had seen modeled by Christ and this is what elders are now to model before their flock and they are to do so eagerly.

MacArthur: Biblical spiritual oversight also involves avoiding three perils inherent in the shepherding task.

Doriani: He states three principles for the *way* in which leaders conduct themselves. He states them in a series of three contrasts in 5:2-3.

Helm: Three pitfalls impair elders' readiness—duty, greed, and a misuse of power.

a) *Duty (5:2b)*

...not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you...

Gardner: Church elders and ministers always experience some in the flock who simply make the work a burden and who disregard advice or even seek to undermine the authority to which they are told to submit.... They should not be unwilling servants or simply doing their work out of obligation and duty. Rather, they should be *willing* to serve, for this is what *God wants*.

MacArthur: The first danger Peter mentions is shepherding *under compulsion*, rather than as eager, willing servant-leaders who minister *voluntarily*. The obvious point is that the shepherd must be diligent rather than lazy, heart motivated rather than forced to be faithful, and passionate about his privileged duty rather than indifferent. When the heart is fully Christ's and driven by love for Him and for souls, there is much internal compulsion that precludes any need for external motivational pressure.... This zealous service is *according to the will of God*, just as the Lord wills the unjust suffering that perfects His saints (4:19). Those who shepherded God's people should have no doubt about the diligence and seriousness with which they should fulfill their spiritual ministry of caring for the precious souls who are the Lord's and they will give an account.

McKnight: Service in the church ought to be done with the proper motive, that is, with a personal willingness and a sense of divine calling, not because of a sense of internal or external compulsion.... If, as many think, age played a critical role in the assignment of the pastoral ministry, then personal willingness and eagerness become even more important.

Doriani: Clearly, elders must care for God's people willingly, not coldly or grudgingly. 'Willingly, not grudgingly' is a good ideal for every calling. The willing shepherd embraces God's will and makes it his own, as a task freely chosen. This does not mean that we are always in the mood for every tasks. Every calling has its drudgery. There is a time to do our duty, as Jesus teaches in the parable of the unthanked servant (Lk. 17:3-10).... But the main motive must be neither duty nor the compulsions of expectations, reputation, or social status, nor the thrall of models or precedents. We should act willingly and cheerfully, for 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9:7).

Helm: The church is not helped when her leaders' readiness falls into the pit of begrudging service. Men who serve only from a sense of duty will not have the requisite love necessary for God's people to flourish.... Biblical elders need to do the right thing, even when they don't feel like it, but elders who are governed merely by duty and not love are falling short of serving God as He would have them.

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b) Greed (5:2c)

...not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

Gardner: Peter warns that shepherds of God's flock should not be *greedy for money*.

MacArthur: The second peril for shepherds to avoid is the temptation to be motivated by money or material benefits.... *Sordid gain* actually goes beyond just seeking wealth and speaks to the shameful acquisition of it. True shepherds will never use the ministry to steal the sheep's money or acquire it dishonestly, like false prophets always do. Such despicable behavior is typical of false shepherds, the charlatans and heretics who masquerade as the servants of God, to make themselves rich and their victims destitute (Is. 56:11; Jer. 6:13; 8:10; Mic. 3:11).... No true shepherd should need personal wealth to motivate him, but he should serve *with eagerness* (*prothumōs*, 'willingly, freely, eagerly') because of the high calling and privilege (cp. 1 Tim. 1:12-17).

McKnight: Besides compulsion, greed is also an unworthy motivation for leading in God's house. Jesus had no fixed income and consequently had to trust in God for His daily provisions (Mt. 6:11, 25-34; 8:20); He taught His disciples that they, too, were to live by faith (10:8-13). This early church squeamishness about reputation and ministry not done for profit leads Peter to reflect on the importance of the same principle: the elders are not to serve in the churches in order to gain a profit. Instead, they are to do their ministry eagerly.

Doriani: The call to serve *not for shameful gain, but eagerly* is best understood if we realize that the practice of compensating church leaders arose early in church history (1 Cor. 9:7; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17). But abuse of the privilege arose quickly, so that Peter, Paul, and postapostolic leaders all had to warn about 'love of money' (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7; see also Paul's refusal to take money in Acts 20:33).... It is no evil for shepherds to be paid for their labors, as 1 Cor. 9:1-14 shows. If an elder has left his regular work, it was fair for the church to pay him, especially if he worked long and well (1 Tim. 5:17). The problem is not payment; it is service for the sake of payments that bring personal gain. It's one thing to *make* money, another to *serve* it.

c) Power (5:3)

³...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

(1) Negative

Gardner: They are not to be *lording it over those entrusted* to them. Power of leadership can be easily abused, but again Peter reminds the shepherds that *God's* flock has only been *entrusted* to them. This is a remarkable responsibility given by the Lord, but it does not mean the church now *belongs* to the under-shepherds or pastors of the local churches.

MacArthur: Finally, those called to shepherd can be imperiled by the desire to sinfully dominate others. *Lording it over* (*katakuriēuō*) connotes intensity in domineering over people and circumstances (see Diotrephes as an example in 3 John 9-10). Any kind of autocratic, oppressive, and intimidating leadership, with elements of demagoguery—traits that typically characterize the leadership style and methodology of unregenerated men—is a perversion of the overseer's office.... As if to further challenge elders with the weight of their responsibility. Peter adds a strong reminder that those who shepherd do not choose their responsibility, or those for whom they are responsible. Every shepherd has a flock *allotted to his charge* (*klērōn*, that which is given to another's care') by the Lord Himself.

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McKnight: Finally, Peter urges the elders to lead by example, not by authoritative domination of their local churches. Again he seems to be reflecting a saying of Jesus (Mk. 10:42). Power, no more today than in the first century, is addictive. It leads to unworthy motives and pollutes decisions that are to be made under the guidance of the Spirit. Instead of seeking God's agenda, power-hungry church leaders pursue their own, doing what they can to increase their own reputation.

Doriani: In ancient times, people measured status by the number of servants or slaves they possessed. Today, we ask how many people take a man or woman's orders, how many attend this church or sign up for this class. But Jesus says, 'Not so with you' (Mt. 20:26). Rather, 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.' Jesus exemplified this principle by coming not 'to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many' (20:28). So godly leaders don't domineer; they set an example.

Helm: The third pitfall of leadership is the misuse of power. The axiom that 'absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Lord Acton) has long stood the test of time. We see it in politics. We see it in business. But according to Peter, we should never see it in church.

(2) Positive

Gardner: The fact that these shepherds are to be examples to the congregations indicates that, in fact, all Christians are to shepherd each other. Each is to care for the other in the body of Christ. The elders have a specific calling to oversee the congregation in its pastoral care, but their example will lead each member to have a caring and compassionate role within the body.

MacArthur: The second positive way elders exercise oversight is by *proving to be examples to the flock*. Shepherds are to become sufficiently involved in the lives of the flock that they establish a godly pattern for the people to follow. The most important aspect of spiritual leadership and the best of its effectiveness is the power of an exemplary life.

McKnight: Instead of leading by dominating power, Peter urges elders to lead by example, as Jesus has been their example (2:18-25).

Doriani: Peter's third lesson is that leaders should operate more by setting an example than by wielding power. They lead their portion or share of God's flock, their share of the universal church, the group they actually know.... First Peter 2:18-25 declares that believers should follow Jesus' example, enduring mistreatment and trusting God for deliverance, just as He did. Now 1 Peter 5:3 says that godly leaders, with their eye on Christ, become examples or patterns for others. (Peter uses different terms for *example*—*hypogrammon* in 2:21 and *tupos* in 5:3—but the sense is the same.)

Helm: These men who exercise the office of elder must always remember that the misuse of their power only impairs the church. Instead, elders ought to go beyond the call of duty in proving themselves as examples to the flock. We are to emulate Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served (see Mark 10:45). Humility and sacrificial service are the hallmarks of godly leadership.

4. Reward (5:4)

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

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a) Chief Shepherd

Gardner: The *Chief Shepherd* is Jesus and He comes in glory when He *appears*. Though they must not work for financial gain, there are eternal rewards which will be theirs on that last day.

MacArthur: *Chief Shepherd* is one of the most beautiful titles for the Savior in all of Scripture. The shepherd imagery for Messiah first appears in the Old Testament (Zech. 13:7; cp. Ps. 23:1). The gospel of John calls Him the Good Shepherd (10:11). The writer of Hebrews calls Christ the Great Shepherd (13:20-21). Earlier in this letter, Peter calls Him the Shepherd and Guardian of souls (2:25). *Appears* (*phaneroō*) means ‘to make manifest,’ ‘to make clear,’ or ‘to reveal.’ Here, as in 5:1, the reference is to Christ’s revelation at the Second coming, at which time shepherds will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Dorani: The Chief Shepherd, also called ‘the great Shepherd’ in Hebrews 13:20, cares for the universal church, and the elders shepherd their local congregations.

b) Crown of Glory

Gardner: The *crown* is not so much about ruling or being a ruler but about honor. Here Peter has in mind something more akin to the laurel wreath that would be given to an athlete who has competed well. This crown is a picture of the *glory* in which Peter has said they will share (5:1)... An eternity in glory awaits these shepherds as they fulfill their calling, as it does all who walk in God’s ways, because the glory will never fade away.

MacArthur: In the Greco-Roman world of Peter’s day, crowns rather than trophies were the awards for victory at athletic events (cp. 1 Cor. 9:24-25)... Temporal crowns would eventually rust, fade, or if made from plants, die quickly. Peter was not looking forward merely to some *unfading* version of an earthly *crown*, but metaphorically to eternal *glory*, which can never fade. The term *unfading* is from the same cognate is the name of the flower (amaranth) that supposedly never faded or lost its bloom (cp. 1:4). Peter’s phrase can be expressed ‘the unfading crown that is glory.’ This is consistent with the use of the genitive case in other mentions of eternal reward. James wrote of the crown that is life (1:12). Paul wrote of the crown that is righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) and the crown that is rejoicing (1 Th. 2:19). All those are facets of eternal blessing and all are imperishable. The reward of eternal glory ought to be all the reason any shepherd needs for desiring to serve faithfully. The theme of future rewards as incentive for Christian service has already been one of Peter’s emphases in this letter (1:4-5, 13; 4:13; cp. 4:7).

McKnight: He now incites them to appropriate behavior by appealing to the *promise* they will receive for faithful discharge of their calling... When Jesus returns as Savior and Judge (cp. 1:3-5, 9, 13, 20; 2:12; 3:9-12; 4:5-6, 7, 13, 17-19), He will give them (cp. 1:9) a *crown of glory* for their faithfulness to Him. It is unwise to think here of a physical crown; rather the crown is the glory of being accepted by God (the *of* in *of glory* is called an epexegetical or appositional genitive; the crown that is glory. A similar expression can be found in English when we say that the disobedient will drink a cup of sorrow, the cup is the experience of sorrow.)—a reward for those elders who conduct themselves as elders should, by serving under God those whom God has given them to serve. Until then they are to serve because of God’s call and the joy that comes from doing His work.

Dorani: When Jesus appears in the glory and victory of His second coming, the elders will receive an unfading crown of glory. The word translated *receive* (*komizō*) here means to receive what is owed, a payment, compensation, or reward... The crown of glory confers neither power

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nor riches. The crown confers glory and honor. Thus, it is like the victor's wreath in the Greek athletic festivals, not the king's royal circlet of gold. To be precise, in the phrase *crown of glory*, *crown* is the metaphor and *glory* is the reality. (From the perspective of Greek grammar, the phrase *crown of glory* is appositional or exegetical. The crown is or consists of glory. The phrase 'crown of life' is identical; see James 1:12; Rev. 2:10.)

Helm: Elders do labor for a reward—one that will be given to them on the day of Christ's return. The prize of *the unfading crown of glory* comes in the next life, not this one.... The reward will certainly be worth the labor—a crown of glory. Therefore, elders everywhere, stay at the work of guarding and guiding God's family.

B. Instructions for God's Sheep (1 Peter 5:5-11)

1. Be Humble (5:5-7)

Dorani: By definition, a church is a gathering of the humble. Disciples are confident of their worth, since we know that God created us in His image and valued us enough to send His Son for us. Yet every believer is aware of his sin and need. Every disciple has repented, and when we repent, we both confess particular sins and admit that we are selfish and rebellious to the bone. Knowing that we are incapable of self-reform, we trust in Christ to forgive and restore us. This is the conviction of every true Christian.

a) *Toward the Elders (5:5a)*

⁵*Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.*

Gardner: There is no reason to limit this instruction to *men*. The word probably simply indicates younger people, that is men and women who are the one most likely to reject authority. *Older* is the word *presbuteros* in Greek. It can mean either 'elder' in terms simply of age or in the moral formal sense of 'church elder.' Different Bible versions take it in different ways. Given the word has been used of the office of being an 'elder' in verse 1 and that is what Peter has been talking about, it seems probable that this is what he intends here. The younger members of the church are reminded that they must *be submissive* to the church elders.... While no Christian is asked to submit to anyone in such a way that he or she will end up disobeying the Lord, nevertheless these elders are under-shepherds serving at the calling of the Lord and so should be afforded full respect and listened to and followed by all.... This submission to church leaders is hard, but it is part of what God has ordained for His church so that *His flock* will be properly fed and cared for.

MacArthur: As he did earlier in the letter (3:1, 7), Peter uses *homoiōs* (*likewise*) as a transition word.... In all three usages, the word marks a change of focus from one group to another. In 5:1-4 Peter addressed church leaders; now he turns to the congregation. As shepherds submit to the Chief Shepherd, so the flock submits to their shepherds.... Although no one is exempt from Peter's exhortation that everyone be submissive to their *elders*, he targets specifically the *younger men*. Though it is not stated in the context why he singled them out, probably he did so because it is so obvious that they generally tend to be the most aggressive and headstrong members of any group. There is no reason to view them as some recognized faction or fixed association in the church. The matter of submission would not likely have been as much of an issue for the women or older people in the church; they were more experienced and more spiritually mature (cp. Ps. 119:100; Pr. 16:31; 20:29). In calling the young to *be subject* to those

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over them in the Lord, Peter again used the military term *huptassō*, ‘to line up under.’ He calls everyone in the church to put aside self-promoting pride and willingly and respectfully place themselves under the leadership of their shepherds (cp. 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7). Clearly, given the previous context (vv. 1-4), *elders* refers to the spiritual leaders, the shepherds and pastors, not merely to older saints.

McKnight: Peter now addresses a different group, the *young men*, instructing them *in the same way* [to] *be submissive to those who are older*. (*In the same way* connects 5:5 to 5:1-4; the connection seems to be that just as the elders have a God-ordained task to perform, so also do the young men. As the elders lead their churches, so the young men should live in line with the elders’ directions.) Some have argued that the *young men* are not just men younger in age but refer to a more specific group within the churches: ‘elders-to-be.’ But we have no evidence that any such group existed in the early churches. Is Peter addressing just men here? Perhaps, though the majority of scholars argue that he is speaking generically of all those who are under the authority of the elders, both men and women. It seems best to me to translate ‘young men’ (NIV) as ‘younger ones,’ referring generically to *all members of the house churches*.... The advice to this group is to listen to the wisdom of the elders and live in accordance with their instruction; that is, they are *to submit*. As stated in 2:13, the term *submission* should be understood as ‘living in according to some constituted order’—here, the order established by the directives of the elders. And since they have already been instructed to lead, not by domination but by example, we can assume that submission here was not some onerous task. Rather it was joyfully acceptable to those who wanted to live in accordance with God’s will.

Dorani: The NIV says that ‘younger men’ must be submissive, but the original is simply ‘the younger’ (ESV). A few interpreters believe ‘the younger’ means younger *leaders*, who should defer to older leaders, but there is no real evidence that the early church had a recognized body of younger leaders. Rather, Peter shifts from the duty of shepherd to flock to the duty of flock to shepherd. *The younger* might seem like an unusual term for the whole church.... Peter has already used *in the same way* (NIV) or *likewise* (ESV) to introduce reciprocal duties in 3:1, 7. So it makes sense to match the duties of *the elders* (5:1) with the duties of *the younger*. It is human nature for adults, especially *the younger*, to pick and choose what we like in the style and direction of our leaders. But we need to question ourselves. If we constantly judge our leaders, deciding what we do and don’t like, what we will and won’t heed, we aren’t truly following them.

b) *Toward One Another (5:5bc)*

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

(1) Our Responsibility (5:5b)

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another...

Gardner: Earlier Peter had written of the need for these Christians ‘to love each other deeply’ and to ‘offer hospitality to one another’ (4:8-9), and here he repeats these ideas. These Christians should be so marked by *humility toward one another* that it will be like clothing themselves with a coat of humility. Just as people will deliberately pick out the clothes they are going to wear, so Christians (*all of you*) should deliberately walk out to face the world and to face each other *clothed* in humility. It should be the mark of Christian brothers and sisters that

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they behave well with each other, putting the other first and listening to and engaging with each other in a humble rather than an arrogant way.

MacArthur: Inseparably linked to and underlying a submissive attitude is a mind given to humility. Because always the truly humble—and only the truly humble—submit, both of Peter’s commands encompass *all* believers. *Clothe (egklomboomai)* literally means ‘to tie something on oneself,’ such as a work apron worn by servants. Here it describes figuratively covering oneself with an attitude of *humility* as one submits to authorities over him. The word for *humility* here is *tapeinophrosunēn*, ‘lowliness of mind,’ or ‘self-abasement.’ It describes the attitude of one who willingly serves, even in the lowliest of tasks (cp. 1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 4:7; Phil. 2:5-7). Perhaps even more so than today, humility was not an admired trait in the first-century pagan world. People saw it as a characteristic of weakness and cowardice, to be tolerated only in the involuntary submission of slaves.

McKnight: Finally, Peter addresses both the elders and the younger members of the churches.... Whether leader or laity, whether old or young, Christians are to develop a deferential and humble attitude toward one another. Peter hinted at this in 3:8-12 and 4:7-11; he now makes it more explicit. The elder is not to arrogate himself to the position of dominant partner, nor are the younger members to rebel against the authority of the elders; rather, they are to respect one another mutually. The elder’s service is by way of leadership while the younger members’ service is by way of conformity to the norm of the elders.

Dorani: The command *clothe yourselves with humility* imagines humility as a garment that believers fasten to themselves. The root of *clothe yourselves* refers to an apron that a slave or herdsman tied over his tunic to keep it clean. In Greek culture, humble-mindedness ‘meant an attitude expected of slaves but unworthy of free people.’ Our word *humiliation* has similar emotional heft. Yet believers should wrap themselves in humility because *God opposes the proud*.

(2) God’s Response (5:5c)

...for “*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*”

Gardner: Peter gives a decisive reason for doing this and draws on Proverbs 3:34; God is opposed to *the proud* and He *gives grace to the humble*.... It will never be easy to live a humble life either inside or outside the church, but God *gives grace* to enable this sort of life. Thus, humility is not an unachievable idealistic goal, but a real attribute of all of God’s people who understand that their obedience is indeed possible, for God gives grace to enable it.

MacArthur: To reinforce his exhortation for humility, Peter quote from Proverbs 3:34, *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (cp. James 4:6). Peter’s quote differs slightly from the Septuagint by substituting *God* for the Septuagint’s ‘Lord,’ but the names are obviously synonymous. Without question, that the Lord *is opposed to the proud* (cp. Pr. 6:16-17a; 8:13) is the greatest motivation for saints to adopt the attitude of humility. Pride sets one against God and vice versa. On the other hand, God blesses and *gives grace to the humble*.

McKnight: Once again, Peter grounds his exhortations in the threatening judgment of God (see at 4:7, 17-19). The Christians of his day do not want to assign themselves to the same fate of the persecuting pagans by living a life of pride and avarice; instead, they should live in accordance with God’s will.

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Doriani: Again and again, the Scriptures tell us that God opposes the proud and brings them low, even as He exalts the humble (1 Sam. 2:7-8; Ps. 138:6; Job 5:11; Is. 2:11; 26:5; Lam. 1:5; Ez. 17:24; Hos. 14:9; Lk 14:11; 18:14; Mt. 23:12)... Both 1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6 quote the Septuagint of Proverbs 3:34 almost verbatim, saying, *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*. Clearly the call to humility pervades Scripture. In 1 Peter, it is the apostle's last word on leadership and the first in his series of closing exhortations for the church.... This is a global principle, often repeated in Scripture. It is a gospel principle, essential for a saving relationship with God. Yet it is vital for human relationships, too. Peter wisely leads with it as he offers his guidance for a church that needs to survive constant pressure, even persecution.

c) Toward God (5:6-7)

McKnight: These two verses bear a striking resemblance to James 4:6-7, 10.... Most scholars see here the reflection of an early Christian tradition that exhorted Christians to humility because of the presence of Satan. Christians need God's grace to gain victory over the devil's assaults. Whereas James brings out the importance of humility for dealing with inner-church strife, Peter draws out the significance of humility and grace for the suffering believer. The humble wait for God's exaltation of believers at the end of time (cp. 2:12).

(1) Humble Yourselves (5:6)

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

Gardner: Peter's command, *humble yourselves*, follows from the quotation from Proverbs. God's *mighty hand* reminds the reader of the way He disciplines His people, but also of how He protects and vindicates them even as they find their humility is scorned by those outside the congregation.... It is by His grace that God will *lift up* Christians *in due time*. The difficulties of being humble even in the midst of persecution and false accusation and slander will often seem overpowering. At some point, in God's own time, He will *lift up* His trampled people and vindicate them. This may be on this earth and in this age, but it is more likely that Peter continues to think of the time of Christ's return and the sharing of *glory* that will then happen. Either way, the Lord is in control.

MacArthur: Based on the above verse from Proverbs that Peter mentioned, this command comes forcefully: *therefore humble yourselves* in submission, not only to avoid divine opposition and to receive divine grace, but because the authority over all believers in the church is none other than *the mighty hand of God*. Or as James stated, 'Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord' (4:10a). The *mighty hand of God* is descriptive of God's sovereign power at work in and through the elders of the church, as well as in the life experience of His people.... In their time of persecution, suffering, and testing, that assurance would encourage Peter's audience to persevere, knowing that all their suffering is only so that *He may exalt them at the proper time* (cp. 5:10). Even as Jesus Christ was born at the appropriate time (Gal. 4:4; Titus 1:3) and died a substitutionary death at the exact time God designed (1 Tim. 2:6), God will *exalt* (*hupsoō*, 'to raise or lift up') believers out of their trials, tribulations, and suffering at His wisely determined time.

McKnight: Believers are to *humble* themselves under *God's mighty hand*. Peter seems to have in mind an eschatological persecution motif. As God's mighty hand was seen in the plagues of the Exodus (see Ex. 3:19; 6:1; 13:3, 9, 14, 16), so His mighty hand is now being seen in the

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persecution the believers in Asia Minor are experiencing. By submitting to and waiting out God's deliverance, they can expect that same mighty hand to deliver them, just as the Lord delivered the children of Israel. While the word behind *due time* may be general (in God's own timing), that same term is used frequently in 1 Peter and early Christian literature for the final day of salvation (cp. 1:5, 7, 13; 2:12; 4:7). It is more likely that Peter thinks of an eschatological vindication of God's suffering people than some kind of reward or vindication in this life.

Dorani: Peter does not say, 'The Lord will humble you,' but 'Humble yourselves.' The command *humble yourselves* signifies that we don't wait for God, an adversary, or the hardships of life to humble us. We must act on ourselves. Peter doesn't specify *how* we humble ourselves, but the phrase *under God's mighty hand* supplies a hint. The phrase *mighty hand* is common in Exodus, where God's power delivered Israel from slavery and oppression in Egypt. God's mighty hand defeated Pharaoh and humbled him, although he did not humble himself (Ex. 6:1; 13:3-16; Dt. 3:24; 4:34). God's strong hand also showed itself in the ministry of Jesus—in the miracles and above all in Jesus' saving death and resurrection (Acts 4:28-30). As with Jesus, so also with the church, suffering leads to glory. God already has power to do what He now promises, that He will lift up His people at the right time. The *due time* or right time (Greek *kairos*) can be the moment that suits God's purposes (Eph. 5:16). Or it can be the time of God's great acts of redemption, including His return. First Peter 1:5b uses *time* in the second way. Even if we are uncertain *when* God will act, in this lifetime or later, when this age ends, He promises to restore the humble.

Sproul: *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God*—in that simple phrase we have a microcosm of the entire Christian life. Obedience means submitting to the arm of the Lord, acknowledging Him as Lord, and acknowledging His eternal and everlasting authority to require of us whatsoever is pleasing to Him. When we do so, He will exalt us in due time. The exaltation will come at the hour that God has appointed. We are told repeatedly in Scripture that God indeed has appointed a time when He will judge the world by His Son, a time when He will vindicate His people, a time when He will share the glory of His Son with those who have embraced His Son.

Helm: Christians are commanded to humble themselves *under the mighty hand of God*. This is tough stuff. Everything within us seems to rise up and resist such a thought. We are taught that glory comes to those who aggressively make their way in the world.

(2) Cast Your Cares (5:7)

⁷...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Gardner: Jesus Himself had warned His disciples not to be anxious when they were persecuted and hauled in before the authorities on account of their preaching (Lk. 12:11-12)... Anxiety leads to fear and this can become totally disabling for a Christian. Peter insists that the Lord loves His people and that He is powerful and has a *mighty hand* (cp. Ps. 55:22)... God works for His people and will uphold them and bring them through all that may be thrown at them. He will do this out of His wonderful *grace*, and for His own glory. Learning to cast our troubles and anxieties on the Lord is difficult for all Christians.... Casting all our anxieties on the Lord thus begins with humble obedience that we demonstrate through full dependence upon Him. As we being to obey, to be humble, and to admit that only the Lord can deal with our anxieties and fears, so we discover more and more about the Lord's care and love for all of us who are His people.

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MacArthur: As believers endure humbly and submissively, they find their strength in the midst of trials, by means of confident trust in God's perfect purposes. The psalmist David is surely Peter's source, since this trust was his, and the apostle must have known his words well: 'Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken' (Ps. 55:22). David's *anxiety* came from attacks by a Judas-like friend (see vv. 12-14), a most difficult trial to bear since it comes from one who is loved and trusted. Peter drew from that text to instruct all believers in all kinds of trouble to follow David's example and give themselves to the Lord's care (cp. 2:23; 4:19). *Casting* (from *epiriptō*) means throwing something on something else or someone else. For example, in Luke 19:35 it is used of throwing a blanket over an animal. Peter exhorts believers to throw on the Lord *all* their *anxiety*, a word that can include all discontentment, discouragement, despair, questioning, pain, suffering, and whatever other trials they encounter because they can trust His love, faithfulness, power, and wisdom.

McKnight: Peter grounds their submission to God in His loving care and protection: *cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*. If Peter has in mind the picturesque words of Jesus (Mt. 6:25-34), he has now taken them into the realm of persecution. Drawing on Psalm 55:22, where the psalmist expresses confidence that God will never permit the righteous to be moved and will eventually bring evildoers to justice, Peter exhorts his churches to express a similar confidence in God's justice. By turning over their fears and worries to God, they express their trust in Him and rely on Him to bring about vindication and justice. The reason for turning over fears to God is because *He cares for you*.

Dorani: We can respond to hardships, sorrows, and delay in God's action in one of two ways. We can grumble and accuse God, or we can trust Him. Peter exhorts his readers to take the second path. *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you*. Israel, sadly, often took the wrong path by grumbling against God.... But we must remember that the Lord has a mighty hand, that He cares for us, and that He acts on *His* schedule. Believers wait for the Lord; they do not *demand* that He act at our word.... Notice that *anxiety* (*merimna*) is singular. We normally think of anxieties in the plural. We worry about work, health, relationships, and a too-dense schedule. Problems roll in like waves, but they can congeal into one mass of anxiety.... Peter commands us to take our anxiety and throw, toss, or cast it onto God. As we throw a bag of gym clothes into a car or hoist a saddle onto a horse, so we should toss our anxiety onto the Lord. (See Luke 19:35, where the disciples *cast*, using the same Greek word, *epiripto*, their cloaks onto a donkey so that Jesus could ride it.). He is mighty and He will exalt us at the right time, because *our* cares are *His*.

Dorani: Jesus tells us not to be anxious: 'Do not worry about your life' (Mt. 6:25-32).... Yet Paul admits that he has anxiety (*merimna* again). He lists his troubles as an apostle—the beatings and jails, the hunger, thirst, cold, and shipwreck—and then concludes, 'And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my *anxiety* for all the churches' (2 Cor. 11:28). So Paul has anxiety and apparently sees it as a *problem* but not as a *sin*. From this we conclude that anxiety is normal in some circumstances and that it's possible to be anxious and yet not sin, if we address it properly. Specifically, we neither panic nor attempt to solve our problems autonomously.... Yet even as we act, we should pray, 'Lord, I've done what I can; now I leave the results to you. My fears weigh me down, and I give them to you.'

Sproul: This idea comes from the fishing industry, not from casting into the water with rods and reels but with nets, as fishermen did in antiquity and still do today. The net must be thrown. It is

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weighted down so that it will sink and fish will swim into it and get caught. Here, this metaphor of casting is used with respect to our anxieties and concerns, the things that weigh us down. Peter says that we are to cast all such cares upon God, and we are to do so because He cares for us.

Helm: In seasons of self-conscious humiliation it is good to know that God cares for us. Yes, anxiety and grief are present. But remember, God is near too. Peter encourages us to pour out our hearts before God in the light of the knowledge of His concern.

2. Be Watchful (5:8-9)

a) Alertness (5:8a)

⁸*Be sober-minded; be watchful.*

Gardner: Peter continues with two further vital commands. There can be no sleeping on the job for Christians in this world. They must be *alert* or watchful and they must be self-controlled in their behavior.

MacArthur: *Be of sober spirit.* This command calls for another basic element of godly thinking, which Peter mentioned already (cp. 1:13; 4:7)... On a physical level, *sober* (*nēpho*) refers to self-control in relation to intoxication. Here, as in its other New Testament usages, however, it has a more metaphorical connotation (cp. 1 Tim. 2:15; 3:2, 11; Titus 2:2). It includes ordering and balancing life's important issues, which requires discipline of mind and bod that avoids the intoxicating allurements of the world... The realities of spiritual warfare call for vigilance Peter urges believers to *be on the alert* (*grēgorēsate*), an imperative command that means 'be watchful,' or 'stay awake.' The spiritual forces that assault Christians not only directly but often very subtly demand that those who love Christ maintain such vigilance (cp. Mt. 26:41).

McKnight: The activity of Christians submitting themselves to God in a confident trust of His ultimate triumph is suddenly interrupted with two sharp commands: *Be self-controlled and alert!* Or, as J. R. Michaels translates: 'Pay attention! Wake up!'

Doriani: Conventional Christian wisdom rightly observes that we make two mistakes regarding Satan. We can take him too seriously, as if he possessed God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. But he is an angel, and like all other creatures, he is in one place at a time, has areas of ignorance, and has finite power. Indeed, Michael the archangel is presented as his peer in Revelation 12:7ff. On the other hand, we can fail to take him seriously enough, reducing him to a cartoon villain. First Peter states the essentials.

Sproul: The sobriety Peter has in mind here is not simply being free from drunken stupors but to be awake and alert. The reason for that is our adversary the Devil. One great error we make is to underestimate the power of Satan. Those who do not believe that Satan exists ball into his hands because they do not believe in his power. Others become so obsessed with Satan that they see a demon behind every bush, and it seems that their faith is more in the occult than in the truth of God. We need a sober and vigilant understanding of the nature of Satan, of his person and work.

b) Adversary (5:8b)

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Gardner: Peter's concern is that Satan, *the devil*, who is the *enemy* of God's people, is out to *devour* them as a *roaring lion* would catch and eat his prey. A lion is known to stalk his prey,

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waiting for the time when the hunted animal is at its most vulnerable. At that moment he will chase and pounce. Just as a gazelle or smaller creature will always be alert for the lion, so God's people are to watch out for the attacks of Satan.

MacArthur: Peter identifies Satan as *your adversary, the devil*, the pronoun *your* making that designation a very personal one. Satan is not only the adversary of God and His holy angels, but he is the vicious relentless enemy of all God's people (cp. Job 1:6-8; 2:1-6; Zech. 3:1). *Adversary (antidikos)* who used as a technical term meaning 'legal opponent,' as well as any kind of enemy who was seriously and aggressively hostile. The term rendered *devil (diabolos)* takes this opposition to the level of a 'malicious enemy who slanders or attacks.' Three times Jesus called him the ruler of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 15:11; cp. Eph. 2:2), which shows the formidable platform from which he launches his malevolent assaults. The devil commands the demonic realm and administrates the human, fallen world system. Personally and through his surrogates the demons, who like him never sleep nor rest, Satan untiringly, like a predator in the night of his own evil darkness, hunts to kill. He *prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour* (cp. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). Peter's imagery of the *roaring lion* derives from the Old Testament (Ps. 7:2; 10:9-10; 17:12; 22:13-21; 35:17; 58:6; 104:21; Ez. 22:24) and pictures the viciousness of this hunter pursuing his prey. *Devour* has the sense of 'to gulp down,' emphasizing the final objective, not to wound but to destroy. Peter would not have had, as most believers today do, the experience of seeing lions in a zoo. But he might have seen the gory spectacle of lions slaughtering victims for the entertainment of the Romans. Certainly he knew of such events.

McKnight: Why? Because *your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*. Satan, it was believed, would be particularly active in the last days (2 Th. 2:3-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Revelation), and since the persecution Peter's readers are suffering is a harbinger of those last days, it is not surprising that he exhorts them to be alert to Satan's activity. The devil's roaring and devouring is possibly to be connected with insults (cp. 2:11-12; Ps. 21:14) or, more probably, with assaults aimed at physical death (2 Tim. 4:17).

Dorani: First, the term *devil* translates a Greek word meaning 'deceiver,' for he does seek to deceive (Zech. 3; Rev. 20:2). Second, he is dangerous. Hungry and wounded lions attack, and Satan, whose name means 'adversary' in Hebrew, is both. His power is limited, but he walks around, looking for victims. Because the devil aims to deceive and then to devour, Peter warns us twice, *be sober-minded; be watchful* (v. 8). Satan operates by tempting or enticing people to sin (cp. Mt. 4:2-3)... Satan has additional tactics. He incites idolatry, the worship of anything but the true God (Mt. 4:8-9). He also tempts us to doubt our standing with God (Rev. 12:10). He confuses or blinds people so that they cannot see the truth (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

Sproul: The metaphor that Peter uses for Satan here is rather strange—he describes Satan as a lion. In Scripture the typical metaphor for Satan is that of serpent or snake, the one who lies, seduces, accuses. The image of a lion in Scripture is usually associated with something more positive, more kingly.... The descendants of the tribe of Judah looked forward to the full manifestation of the line that would come from the seed of David, the Lion of Judah (cp. Gen. 49:9-10), the title given to Jesus. Here in Peter's epistle, Satan receives that same marvelous metaphor of the lion that was usually reserved for Christ. Peter describes Satan as our adversary. He is our supreme opponent, the one who stands against us and seeks our ruin. So often, we think that the principle role of Satan is to entice or tempt us to sin. Indeed, he does that, but even more devastating is his role of accuser.... How can we tell the difference between the ministry of

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the Holy Spirit, who is sent to convict us of our sins, and the work of Satan, who comes to accuse us of our sins? Both point to the same sin but for radically different reasons. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, it is to redeem and cleanse us. Being convicted by the Holy Spirit can be an exceedingly painful process, and true repentance can be painful, but there is always something sweet about it. When the Spirit convicts us, and we recognize it, He takes us to the Savior for forgiveness, not destruction. Satan's goal is not our redemption but our ruin. He is our adversary.

c) Advice (5:9)

⁹*Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

Gardner: These attacks will lead to *suffering* and Christians everywhere (*brothers throughout the world*) experience this. Being ever watchful will enable people to *resist him*.... Resistance to the devil will mean decisively *standing firm in the faith*. This is where the rubber hits the road! If Christians are to resist the devil, then they must do so through faith in Christ and trust in the power which He has over all things, including Satan. They will need to recall some of the teaching that Peter has already given in this letter. He has spoken of them being 'shielded' by God's power until the coming of the salvation' (1:4-5). He has reminded them of the coming grace: 'Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set you hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed' (1:13). He has told them that they are 'a people belonging to God' (2:9-10) who 'have received mercy.' Standing on these great truths about who God is and who Jesus is, and what God has done for His people and how He protects them for their inheritance will always be the main way of resisting the Devil. This is all about turning constantly to God even as attacks and temptations come, and realizing that the Lord is the one who is in control and who truly loves His people.

MacArthur: Peter commands Christians to have a mind that is resolute and to *resist* Satan by being *firm in their faith*. Such resistance causes the devil 'to flee from you' (James 4:7). *Resist* means 'to take a stand against,' and to be *firm* is to make that stand solid (the Greek is *stereos*, from which comes the English *stereo*, meaning 'solid,' or balanced at both ends). That is done by being solidly fixed on '*the faith*' (*tē pistei*), which is biblical revelation. It is the whole body of revealed truth contained in Scripture. This is a call to know and believe sound doctrine, to be discerning in distinguishing truth from error, and to be willing to defend the truth and expose error. Jude's call is most appropriate in this connection (Jude 3).... Peter concludes this section with a word of assurance to his readers as they persevered humbly and submissively, vigilantly and courageously in the midst of many persecutions, sufferings, and trials—they were not alone. He reminded them *that the same experiences of suffering were being accomplished by their brethren who are in the world*. Believers in other places could empathize with them because very segment of the Christian community has experienced or will experience attack from the Enemy.

McKnight: Christians resist Satan by refusing to succumb to his temptations to deny the Lord and to be faithless and fearful in the midst of suffering. They can do this *because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings*. This expression makes it clear that Peter sees Satan's assaults (his roaring and swallowing) as connected with physical persecution; he exhorts them, therefore, to remain faithful and obedient. Their encouragement come from the worldwide family of God, for everywhere Christians are suffering.

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Doriani: Resist him, standing firm in the faith, Peter commands. James adds, ‘Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (James 4:7). It’s hard to resist the devil, and at first, the longer we resist, the harder it feels.... One way to resist sin is to flee temptation. Paul advised, ‘Flee from sexual immorality’ (1 Cor. 6:18) and ‘flee from idolatry’ (10:14). He told Timothy to flee from love of money, to ‘flee the evil desires of youth,’ and to ‘pursue righteousness’ (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22).... Resistance to temptation should be both individual and communal. God’s grace trains us to ‘renounce world passions,’ so that we are responsible, as individuals, to monitor our internal life. Each individual is responsible to say ‘No’ when sin presents itself (Titus 2:11-12). Yet the command to resist the devil is, like the other commands here, address to *you*, plural. We are part of the church, and together we strive to live faithfully.

Sproul: Elsewhere in Scripture we are told, ‘Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (James 4:7) and ‘He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world’ (1 Jn. 4:4). We are no match for Satan, but once we are equipped with the whole armor of God, Satan is no match for us. This stalking, roaring, threatening lion will flee with his tail between his legs.... *Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.* People interpret these words in different ways. Some say we are to resist him by a steadfast or solid faith, which is a possible rendering of the text. However, I think Peter meant that the way we resist him is by having ourselves deeply rooted in the content of the Christian faith or doctrine. Doctrine has to do with God’s revealed truth, and those who master the doctrine of the Word of God have a solid foundation by which they are empowered to resist the devouring enemy. Peter also says that our problems are not unique. We are not alone in our experiences of suffering and affliction.

3. Be Hopeful (5:10-11)

a) *The God of All Grace (5:10)*

¹⁰*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

(1) Our Suffering (5:10a)

¹⁰*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace...*

Gardner: *After...a little while* is a rather vague statement but Peter is making a very important point—the suffering will not last forever, and the glory is eternal! This contrast is one that suffering Christians of all generations should grasp: the sufferings are temporary, but the glory in Christ to which they are *called*, is eternal. In fact, it is His *eternal glory in Christ* and so Christians are as secure in this as Christ Himself is.

MacArthur: Hope provides believers with the settling confidence that after the trouble and difficulty of this life, they can count on God glorifying them in heaven. And during this life they can count on His continued work of sanctifying them through their suffering.... For them to fully appreciate that future purpose, believers must realize that it may come only after they *have suffered for a little while* (1:6; cp. Rom. 8:18).... Christians need not fear suffering, knowing that nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Rom 8:31-39). Peter calls God *the God of all grace*, which is reminiscent of Paul’s title ‘the God of all comfort’ (2 Cor. 1:3). God has already promised grace for eternity; here *grace* is provided for the present, to strengthen believers and make their Christian character what it ought to be.

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McKnight: Peter's letter ends on a note of prayer, which he begins with a *theological reflection*. The God they worship and serve is a God of grace. That is, He is merciful and forgiving. He has brought them into covenantal relationship through no merit of their own, He has chosen (1:1-23) to make them His people (2:9-10) and promises His protection (1:3-8).

Doriani: Peter closes his epistle with the assurance that the outcome of our life rests more on God's power and grace than on our labors.... This is good news. God, the source of all grace, has called us to *eternal glory*. Still, suffering precedes glory (4:13), so we must suffer *a little while* before He restores and strengthens us.

(2) Our Calling (5:10b)

...who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ...

Gardner: It is vital for the Christian to remember that everything begins with God who is *the God of all grace*. In His undeserved love and mercy towards His people, He *called* them. The call was not to follow Christ to somewhere unknown, but to the final and full destination of sharing in *his eternal glory in Christ* (4:13-14 and 5:1). On this road to glory comes suffering, as it did for Christ, but the Lord will lift up and restore the Christian to a firmness and steadfastness of faith because He *is* the God of all grace. Restoration in this life will lead to a time of peace and joy, but Peter may be thinking here of the peace and joy at the coming of Christ.

MacArthur: The apostle further notes that God has *called* believers (a reference to His effectual, saving call; cp. 1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:9) to *His eternal glory in Christ*.

McKnight: This theological reflection is then directed toward the *specific calling* God has given them. He has appointed them to *His eternal glory in Christ*. From the outset of this letter, Peter has focus on the eschatological hope of believers, a hope that sustains them during their suffering. But this hope is not just something that permits them to cope with suffering; it is in fact the destined calling God has given them. He made them His people so they could be with Him eternally and praise Him forever.

Helm: True grace looks like this: present sufferings are intimately connected to eternal glory. And the one always precedes the other. Peter repeats this here in summary fashion to fix it forever in our mind and heart—and to encourage us with the promise that God will see us through. God will one day bring us home. We will suffer for a little while—that is, this whole life through—but then we will gain eternal reward and glory. Therefore, Peter has chosen to end his letter not with suffering and submission but with our salvation.

(3) Our Restoration (5:10c)

...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Gardner: Peter says, God *will Himself restore you*. God oversees even this suffering. He will bring it to an end when He decides, and throughout it all He is *the God of all grace*. His love for His people is maintained and He will carry through to completion the work that He has begun in their lives. The persecuted Christian may be broken and hurt and may feel her or she has failed or let the Lord down, but God will without doubt restore. Peter knew this so well in his own life. He had denied Christ during that time of His intense suffering when Peter was fearful for his own life. But Christ restored him and set his feet once again on a *firm* path. God made him *strong* and *steadfast*.

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MacArthur: The saints' glory will be to be made like Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20-21). Because of that objective, God *will Himself* (personally), in the meantime while they are still here—and even when the devil attacks them—use believers' suffering to mold them into Christ's image (cp. 2 Th. 3:3). Peter concisely describes the promise of that earthly, sanctifying process of spiritual maturation by God with four nearly synonymous words: *perfect* (to bring to wholeness); *confirm* (to set fast); *strengthen* (to make sturdy); and *establish* (to lay as a foundation). These terms all connote strength and immovability, which God wants for all believers as they face the spiritual battle. He sets them firmly on the truth of divine revelation, where they stand in faith and confidence until they realize their eternal glory.

McKnight: Finally, Peter's *prayer* is for their strength—strength to endure, to remain faithful, and to resist the temptations to the flesh (2:11; 4:4). Peter's prayer reinforces his promise in 5:6 that God will lift them up by sustaining their lives on a daily basis.

Dorani: Peter uses four nearly synonymous verbs, all in the future tense, to emphasize God's promise. The promises rise in a rhetorical crescendo. God Himself will restore us, establish us, strengthen us and set us on a firm foundation. All of this happens *in Christ*, that is, through our union with Him, and by God's eternal power. Thus, as God one day sets creation right and removes the sin that drives all suffering He pledges to restore us too.

Helm: Peter finishes his letter with a forceful flurry of verbs—all actions that are taken by God to ensure our safe arrival on Heaven's shore... Four marvelous verbs. We will be completely restored, confirmed, strengthened, and established. The word translated *restore* is in other places translated *mend*. In fact, it is used when Jesus approaches His disciples and finds them *mending* their nets. Peter, the fisherman, more than most, knew what this term meant. And now he uses it to speak of what God will do for each one of us. He will *mend* us. He will attend to us. He will make us whole. He will *stand us up* on our own two feet, for that is what *confirm* means. He will *strengthen* and *establish* us. Those final verbs, architectural in nature, are terms that echo Peter's earlier teaching that we are being built up into the spiritual house of God (2:3-8). When we arrive at Heaven's gate, we will be His dwelling.

b) *The God of All Glory (5:11)*

¹¹*To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The fact is that whatever power the lion may seem to have, however sad and painful may be the suffering, only God Himself has true *power* and it exists *for ever and ever*. The suffering Christian, and the Christian community as a whole, can therefore trust that God will deliver restoration, strength, and steadfastness.

MacArthur: Contemplating all the aforementioned divine grace and overwhelmed by the thought of sanctification and glorification, as well as wanting to illustrate a mindset of worship, Peter bursts out into a short doxology, rejoicing that God has *dominion* over all things *forever and ever*... *Dominion* (*kratos*) actually signifies strength, and here denotes God's ability to dominate, to have everything in the universe under His sovereign and unassailable control. Since He has all wisdom, power authority, and sovereignty, He is worthy of all the praise and worship saints can render to Him.

Sproul: Peter gives a benediction: *To Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen—soli Deo gloria*. Peter had been there for the Sermon on the Mount. He had heard Jesus explain how to pray: 'Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen' (Mt. 6:13).

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Helm: It is any wonder that the words that tumble forth from Peter's pen next are those of singular and eternal adoration? Verse 11 says: *To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* What else could possibly come from the lips of those who have received so much? In all our sufferings, in all our trials, His eternal glory is manifest, His grace is truly known, and His dominion will carry on forever. The dominion of God will never be extinguished. It will never be snuffed out. Throughout the centuries Christians have understood their sufferings in light of what is being accomplished for His eternal dominion.

Soli Deo Gloria.

For next time: Read 2 Peter 1:1-2.

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Lesson Summary

XIII. The God of All Grace and Glory (1 Peter 5:1-11)

Aim: To live humbly within the church community by His grace, alertly in the world with faithfulness, and expectantly in hope for God's glory.

A. Instructions for God's Shepherds (5:1-4)

Peter instructs the elders of the church how they are to serve as shepherds of God's sheep and overseers of the Lord's flock. This is a weighty responsibility, especially in light of the warning in 4:17-19 about judgment beginning in the house of God.

1. Relationship (5:1)

- Peter's exhortation is made to the plurality of *elders (presbuteroi)*; he establishes a connection or relationship with them in three different areas
- First, Peter is a *fellow elder (sumpresbuteros)*; he understands the office of elder, shares in the responsibilities, and lifts them up to his level (he is also an apostle)
- Next, Peter is a *witness (martus) of the sufferings of Christ*; not only was he a physical eye-witness, but he also testifies (or witnesses) to the truth, as do the elders
- Finally, Peter is a *fellow partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed* when Christ returns; he shares (*koinōnos*) in the hope of heavenly reward

2. Role (5:2a)

- The elders are to be *shepherds* of God's flock; they are to take care of and tend the sheep of the church, always remembering that it is *God's* flock, not their own
- They are also called to be *exercising oversight (episkopountes)*; watch over, guard

3. Readiness (5:2b-3)

- Peter gives a series of three contrasts describing how they are to shepherd and oversee
- Duty: *not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you*
- Greed: *not for shameful gain, but eagerly*
- Power: *not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples (tupos) to the flock*

4. Reward (5:4)

- Jesus is the *chief Shepherd* who gives rewards at his appearing (second coming)
- *You will receive the unfading crown of glory*; the crown that is glory

B. Instructions for God's Sheep (5:5-11)

These are Peter's final instructions to the churches of Asia Minor on how to live the Christian life in the midst of suffering.

1. Be Humble (5:5-7)

- Those who are *younger* are to submit (*huptassō*) to those who are *elder* (the elders); this is a reciprocal duty reminiscent of Peter's commands in 2:13-3:7
- The entire church (elder and younger) are to *clothe* themselves with *humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'* (Pr. 3:34)
- They are also to humble themselves toward God, *under the mighty hand of God* (reminiscent of God's mighty hand humbling Pharaoh and Egypt in the exodus)
- At the *proper time (kairos)*, God will exalt them (in glory)
- We are to *cast* all our *anxieties* (Greek singular *merimna*) on God because He cares for us

2. Be Watchful (5:8-9)

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- *Be sober-minded; be watchful; ‘Pay attention! Wake up!’* We need to be aware of our adversary, the devil
 - The devil (*diabolos*) is the accuser, the adversary; he is like a hungry lion stalking and devouring his prey
 - We are to *resist him* by standing *firm in your faith*; i.e., knowing and believing the truth of the gospel
 - We are not alone in this; *the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world*
3. Be Hopeful (5:10-11)
- Our suffering is only for *a little while* (length of our lives compared to eternity)
 - God is *the God of all grace* who is able to help us
 - He has *called us to His eternal glory in Christ*; suffering precedes glory
 - He will *restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*; He strengthens us for spiritual battle against the adversary and to prepare us for glory
 - Peter closes with a doxology, a benediction: *To him be the dominion forever and ever.*
 - Our hope in this life and the next is based on the God of all grace and glory. Amen.
 - (Remember, we covered 5:12-14 in the first, introductory lesson on 1 Peter).

In light of Peter’s admonition that judgment begins in the household of God (4:17), Peter turns to the responsibility of elders to shepherd and oversee God’s flock well in 5:1-4. Peter identifies himself with the church elders in three ways: 1) he is a fellow elder, who understands the role; 2) he is a fellow witness of the sufferings of Christ, testifying to the truth of the gospel; and 3) he is a fellow partaker in the glory that will be revealed at the coming of Christ. Peter exhorts these elders to shepherd God’s own flock and to exercise oversight in doing so. They are to do so willingly, not out of compulsion; eagerly, not out of greed; and humbly as examples to the flock, rather than domineering. If they serve faithfully they will receive from the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Himself, a crown of glory in eternity as their reward.

Peter’s final instructions to the members of the churches of Asia Minor are contained in 5:5-11 and cover three broad topics of living the Christian life in the midst of a fallen world. We are to be humble, to be watchful, and to be hopeful. Peter’s call to humility is focused in three different directions. First, the younger are to submit to their elders, especially the elders (leadership of the church). The entire church is called to clothe themselves in humility toward each other, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’ (Pr. 3:34). Finally, we are all to humble ourselves toward God and under His mighty arm. The promise is that we will, in due time, be exalted, i.e., in glory forever, with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Despite living lives with suffering and anxieties, we are called to cast our cares on God, because He cares for us. Peter’s second topic concerns a warning to alert and watchful, because our primary spiritual adversary, Satan, is like a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour. We are called to resist him by standing firm in the faith, being grounded in the truths of the gospel. We should expect his accusations, since it is the common lot of Christians around the world. Finally, Peter returns to the message of hope in the midst of suffering, which pervades his letter. Although our suffering on earth seems difficult, it is only for a little while; our eternal calling from the God of all grace is glory in heaven. Therefore, he will restore us, strengthen us, and cause us to stand, both in this life and the next. Therefore, to Him be all glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. *Soli Deo Gloria.*