

**Text: 1 Pt 5.1-4**

As we turn into 1 Pt 5, it seems that the topic of persecution / suffering that was our thematic undercurrent since 1 Pt 3.14 simply disappears.

However, in this new chapter there are a couple of little hooks that show us the theme continues, perhaps as a little trickling stream, running through the exhortation of our text tonight.

As I studied the passage, I kept thinking ... maybe there is more than one message here. We will see. Tonight, I want to give you a good overview of the passage, we might come back and hit a couple of themes in later messages.

Read 1 Pt 5.1-4

As I mentioned, there is a connection with suffering in our text (a small connection, perhaps). When we see it, and consider the content of our text, I think we come away understanding why Peter turns (seemingly) from addressing “the brethren” to addressing the “elders.”

**Proposition:** For the sake of the flock in troubling times, good shepherds are imperative.

**I. The context of troubling times**

A. “Therefore” – the first trickle of the theme

1. The little word “therefore” is missing in many manuscripts
2. The English translations are a mixed bag on it: some “therefore,” some “so,” and some nothing
3. Most of the commentators I read are for it — however, I haven’t read *all* the commentators
4. If the word is not present, the interjection of this exhortation seems incongruent
  - a. In vv. 6-11, Peter clearly returns to the theme of suffering
  - b. If present, this passage is somehow related to the preceding

“When you see a therefore, look back at the context to see what it’s there for.”

- c. If present (and I think it is) the exhortation to the elders is *in light of* the undercurrent of suffering

d. If absent, the exhortation is like a big rock in the stream

- 1) The theme of suffering sloshes up against our passage
- 2) Peter stops talking about suffering and decides to exhort the elders
- 3) And then the theme of suffering springs up again afterwards

5. Some comments showing how the theme fits

“The elders are now addressed because as leaders they may face the brunt of persecution first.”<sup>1</sup>

“In view of the inevitability of trials and God’s judgment Peter gave a special charge to the elders (overseers) of the congregations of his readers.”<sup>2</sup>

“The suffering and persecution faced by believers (4:12–19) puts a strain on the entire community. Both leaders and those who are younger must, in such a situation, respond appropriately to others in the church.”<sup>3</sup>

B. Peter’s second justification of his exhortation “as ... witness of the sufferings of Christ”

1. More in a minute, but note that his exhortation is in light of these sufferings
2. Also note that the sufferings of Christ form the backdrop for believer’s sufferings, esp. in 1 Pt

## II. The authority of our exhorter

A. Your fellow elder

1. Peter identified himself as an apostle in 1.1
2. Here he identifies as a “fellow-elder”
  - a. He knows the pressure the churches (and especially the elders) are under

<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 230.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Pt 5.1.

<sup>3</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 231.

- b. He models the kind of leadership he will encourage; he identifies himself with them

Apostles held a unique role, but were also, in a sense, elders, carrying out the same kind of ministry (on a wider basis) and with the same kinds of concerns for the people.

3. Consequently, this is an exhortation, not a command

“an appeal to the conscience”

## B. A witness of the Passion

1. I call this “the Passion” as a term for “the sufferings of Christ”
2. Of course, Peter is an eyewitness of the event — this is part of his apostolic authority

Hiebert calls this “a delicate reminder of the actual difference between himself and the elders addressed”<sup>4</sup>

3. But here, the exhortation is also based on sufferings, esp. of Christ
  - a. Jesus likewise suffered
  - b. Peter knows all about that suffering
  - c. He urges us to function properly in light of our suffering

## C. A partaker of the coming glory

1. Our universal destiny as believers
2. This refers to the soon to come glory of the returning Christ
3. For Peter, faithfulness in suffering is worth it for the glory that is coming

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<sup>4</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 301.

### III. The content of the exhortation

#### A. An exhortation about their work

1. Bare exhortation: shepherd the flock God gave you
  - a. The image of the shepherd a common ancient metaphor for leadership
  - b. Involves many functions:

“Pastoring includes the duties of feeding, leading, guiding, guarding, and providing for the needs of those in the church as a shepherd does for his sheep (cf. John 21:16).”<sup>5</sup>

- c. Includes “exercising oversight” (“bishopsing”)
  2. Clarified exhortation: three contrasts
    - a. Not under compulsion but willingly
      - 1) If someone serves because it is merely a duty, what will happen when suffering is involved?
      - 2) If someone serves because they willingly love the flock, desiring the will of God, what does suffering matter?
    - b. Not for sordid gain, but eagerly (or “eagerly rather than selfishly”)
      - 1) Note: it is *sordid* gain that is the issue
        - a) The apostles affirm (and this text assumes) that elders are paid for their work
        - b) Sordid gain is “ill gotten gain” — somehow defrauding or cheating or abusing the position for money
      - 2) The man who serves for what he gets out of it will not stand when the wolf comes

“Where the love of gain reigns, the shepherds are prone to become mere hirelings, feeding themselves at the expense of the flock.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Constable, *Expository Notes*, 1 Pt 5.2.

<sup>6</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 304.

### 3. Not as bullies but as examples

- a. Note: This last contrast implies that elders have real authority
- b. The issue is abuse of authority — bullying, controlling, ruling
- c. When suffering comes, you need examples to follow, not tyrants taking advantage

### B. An exhortation about their hope

1. One day, the Chief Shepherd will come
2. When that day comes, the faithful elders will receive the unfading crown
  - a. “Crown” = *stephanos*, the laurel wreath of victory in battle or at the Olympic games
  - b. Unlike the laurel wreath, this crown is unfading
  - c. It is a “crown of glory” – a crown made up of glory
3. Peter lays it out as a motive: it is his motive, see v. 1

“The verb ‘will receive’ (*komieisthe*, cf. 1:9) conveys the thought of getting something for oneself and carrying it off as wages or a prize.”<sup>7</sup>

### Conclusion:

The flock of God needs shepherds. As I think about what Peter says here about “Proper Shepherding in Troubling Times,” I know the desire of the office.

Paul said, “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.” (1 Tim 3.1)

These days, we are seeing a shortage of pastors. I see calls for pastors in various places and feel the pull. I almost wish I could clone myself and go and serve everywhere.

And I wish that I could take this pattern laid out for us here and live it out perfectly, as the right kind of shepherd.

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<sup>7</sup> Hiebert, 306.

We need more shepherds here in our church as well. As the work increases, we need more men. As I age, we need another man. As trouble increases, we need faithful men.

So, let's pray, and let's pray for our young men, that some of them would take up the burden. As a church, we desperately need men to be faithful pastors.