

1 & 2 Peter: Faith Under Fire

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and
unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith
for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
(1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV)*

Preparing For Final Judgment

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1 Peter 5:1-14

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning church! I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to 1 Peter 5:1; that's on page 1016 in your pew Bibles. As you are doing that let me remind you where we left off last week. In chapter 4 Peter was preparing his people for the inevitability of persecution. It hasn't come YET, Peter says, but it will and to prepare them for that Peter tells them, first of all, to live like they are already dead. Decide that you will die to the world. You won't reclaim the centre. You won't get back your position, your privilege or your pleasures. That stuff is gone and it's not coming back – so you might as well just do your duty. That's what he tells them. And then he tells them that they've been focused on the wrong problem anyway. Why are you worried about persecution? Persecution is a MINOR inconvenience compared with the looming catastrophe of FINAL JUDGMENT.

That's what you ought to be thinking about and so in this chapter – chapter 5 he tells them how to prepare. And he begins by speaking to the elders – which is exactly what we would expect. Remember Peter quoted last week from Ezekiel 9 – do you remember the weird vision about the angel who marks people who should be spared from the coming judgment? Let me read that to you again, God says to the angels who will come AFTER the marking angel:

“Pass through the city after him, and strike. Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. Kill old men

outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were before the house. (Ezekiel 9:5–6 ESV)

Are you hearing that? Judgment is coming and it begins with the ELDERS in the house of the Lord! We don’t read that passage during the Nominating Committee process – otherwise we wouldn’t have any candidates – but here it is in your Bibles. We are going to judge the people of God – and we are going to begin with the elders – that’s what the text says and so that’s how Peter organizes this chapter that closes off his first letter to these people.

He’s got some closing counsel here for ELDERS and OTHERS on how to prepare for final judgment. Hear now the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 1:

So 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: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. 13 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 14 Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (1 Peter 5:1–14 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Following the pattern presented in the Old Testament Peter addresses the elders and the shepherds first. He says to them that you should prepare for final judgment first and foremost by:

How Shepherds Should Prepare For Judgment:

1. By doing your job

Look at verse 1 again:

So 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: 2 **shepherd the flock of God** that is among you (1 Peter 5:1–2 ESV)

Our English word “pastor” comes from the Latin word for “shepherd” – a pastor is a shepherd. His job is directly analogous to the job of a shepherd – Peter isn’t making this up, he got that from Jesus. Remember when Jesus restored Peter to the ministry after he denied him three times? Do you remember what he said to Peter?

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “**Feed my lambs.**” 16 He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “**Tend my sheep.**” 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “**Feed my sheep.** (John 21:15–17 ESV)

He gave him three overlapping commands: Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. In street level English he said:

1. Teach the baby Christians.
2. Lead the congregation.
3. Teach the mature Christians.

The job of a pastor therefore is 2 parts preaching – easy stuff and hard stuff – and 1 part leading. Do that Peter if you want to be a pastor! Preach and lead. Peter uses overlapping imagery here when addressing the pastors. The whole text of verse 2 reads:

shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (1 Peter 5:2 ESV)

The job of a pastor requires a couple of different words – it’s a shepherding thing, its an oversight thing, it’s a feeding thing and a leading thing. That’s what it means to be a pastor and you want to be doing that when Christ returns.

Peter of course is not saying anything new here – he got this from Jesus. Jesus told a parable once that Peter listened to very carefully. He said:

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to

beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:45–51 ESV)

Apparently if you are feeding yourself and enriching yourself and abusing the sheep and hanging out with drunkards when Jesus comes back you are in for a nasty surprise. What you want to be doing, according to this parable is feeding the people of God – the members of the master’s household.

You want to be doing your job.

Your job is making sure the sheep are well fed and well led.

The little ones are supposed to be getting milk.

The big ones are supposed to be getting meat.

And the flock as a whole is supposed to be well cared for.

If you are an elder – if you are a pastor – then that is the first thing Jesus will be looking at when he returns to judge the living and the dead. And apparently a pastor or elder who fails that evaluation is in for some pretty horrific consequences. Let me repeat those. Jesus said that the Master will:

will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:45–51 ESV)

So forget about persecution – you ought to be thinking about that. What can Caesar do to you compared with that? What can Justin Trudeau do to you compared with that?

The best way to prepare for final judgment brother pastor, brother elder – is to do your job – and keep an eye on your motivations. That’s the second thing that Peter says to the shepherds in advance of final judgment.

2. By managing your motivations

In the second half of verse 2 he tells them to do their jobs:

not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly (1 Peter 5:2 ESV)

The Bible is pretty clear that some pastors will earn their living from the Gospel – but they must not be motivated by the living that they receive. So for example in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 we read:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:17–18 ESV)

Based on this verse, if I were hired as a consultant by a group of churches I think I would advise them to pay their pastor the amount that would cause him to spend the least amount of time thinking about how much he gets paid. If you pay him too much he may begin harbouring worldly ambitions. If you pay him too little he may be overcome with anxiety about the needs of his family. Find the number that will cause him to spend as little time as possible thinking about money and pay him that. That would be my advice to churches.

My advice to pastors would be to let other people in the church figure out how much you should get paid.

You just do your job.

Be in it for Jesus and let others take care of your personal and family needs.

Thirdly, Peter tells the shepherds to prepare for coming judgment:

3. By setting a good example

not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:3 ESV)

A pastor tries to lead people primarily through the power of the pulpit and through the power of personal example – and let me tell you something, that is a tough way to lead. I was this conversation with someone just the other day. Most pastors don't actually have executive or

director level authority in their churches. They lead through the pulpit, through the power of persuasion and through the power of personal example – and that’s a lot harder than just making all the decisions yourself. It takes a lot longer. You have to let people see you living and learning through a variety of real life situations. They need to see how you are applying these truths in your own life.

Now this doesn’t mean that the pastor has to be perfect. It means that the pastor has to be authentic. He has to be able to say: here’s how this affected me. Here’s how this convicted me. Here’s how I’m responding to that. Here’s how I’m growing in this particular area.

That’s tough. And that’s slow. And that’s WHY so many pastors want to find some kind of shortcut but declaring themselves CEOs or by giving themselves 51% of the leadership pie – but that’s not how Peter says we ought to do it. Use the pulpit Peter says. Convince people. Show it to them in the Bible and show it to them in your own life.

That’s how Pastors pursue change and according to Peter that’s how Pastors prepare for final judgment.

In verses 5-11 Peter turns his attention to the regular members of the church.

How Sheep Should Prepare For Judgment:

Look at verse 5:

Likewise, you who are younger,

Wayne Grudem suggests here that given the allusion to Ezekiel 9 this means roughly “Likewise those who are not elders; likewise the rest” – to them Peter says:

be subject to the elders. (1 Peter 5:5 ESV)

Peter speaks to the elders first – we have to have them doing what they are supposed to be doing before we give this kind of counsel don’t we? But if you’ve got elders and pastors doing what they are supposed to be doing then this is what you need to do to prepare for Final Judgment.

You need to prepare, first of all:

1. By submitting to your elders

Now, we live in an age that is obsessed with personal autonomy and that glorifies individualism and rebellion so we struggle to believe that God wants us to submit ourselves to congregations generally and to elders in particular but here it is – in black and white – right here in your Bible, and it isn't just here, its all over the Bible. The author of Hebrews says pretty much the same thing, he says:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. (Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

The apostle to the Hebrews is operating under the assumption that all people should be in submission to particular elders and that all elders will be held accountable for particular people. Jonathan Leeman of 9Marks ministry writes:

“Christ does not call us to join a church, but to submit to a church”¹

Now a lot of people don't like that, but given what Peter says here in 1 Peter 5:5 it is very hard to figure out why. The Bible says:

be subject to the elders. (1 Peter 5:5 ESV)

The Bible says:

Obey your leaders and submit to them (Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

So why is this controversial?

It is controversial because it is counter-cultural. This isn't what we are used to hearing. But it is what the Bible has been saying for a very long time. When Jesus comes back individual Christians want to be found belonging and submitting to particular churches and elders – if this text is to be believed.

¹ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 14.

Charles Spurgeon wrote once:

“Some Christians have never yet been baptized: how will they answer for willful neglect of a known duty?”²

I think you could easily paraphrase that to read: “Some Christians have never yet submitted to the authority of a local congregation and to a specific group of elders: how will they answer for willful neglect of a known duty?”

That’s a good question – and I don’t have an answer for you. The text is pretty clear. To prepare for final judgment, you need to find a good church, with godly pastors and elders and you need to submit to their leadership.

Secondly, Peter tells people to prepare for final judgment:

2. By clothing yourself with humility

Peter uses the same word in 5 when he says “clothe yourselves with humility” that Paul uses in Philippians 2:3-4:

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, **but in humility** count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3–4 ESV)

Humility therefore means living and serving for the benefit of others rather than for ourselves. It means seeking not our own interests but the interests of others. A Christian gives his or her life away in service of other people – most particularly other Christians. Look carefully at 1 Peter 5:5. Peter says to clothe yourselves with humility:

toward one another (1 Peter 5:5 ESV)

Now that isn’t to say that Christians are not serving outsiders – we have the Parable of the Good Samaritan after all which seems to be saying that Christians should be prepared to love ANYONE IN NEED – but the emphasis – the priority is ALWAYS on serving fellow Christians.

Paul says in Galatians 6:

² Charles Spurgeon, *Eyes Right in Sermons On Proverbs* (USA: Codex Spiritualis, 2012), 26.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and **especially to those who are of the household of faith**. (Galatians 6:9–10 ESV)

A Christian humbly serves ALL PEOPLE – ESPECIALLY those who are of the household of faith. Now, if a Christian does that – who will take care of him? God will - that's why Peter says next; we prepare for final judgment:

3. By trusting God implicitly

casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7 ESV)

To live like this you have to be trusting in God implicitly and entirely. The two go hand in hand. We serve others humbly when we trust God implicitly. We take care of others and we trust God to take care of us. That's how Christians live in the shadow of persecution and in anticipation of coming judgment.

Fourthly, Peter tells folks to prepare for final judgment:

4. By remaining alert and sober minded

Look at verse 8:

Be sober-minded; be watchful. (1 Peter 5:8 ESV)

We talked about this last week because sobriety of thought is a major Petrine theme. By the way, it was also a major Johannine theme – almost like they had studied under the same Master or something. John in his Apocalypse talks about the Whore of Babylon who rides on a beast. The whore represents the seductive power of culture and the beast represents government and political structure. They are both agents of the devil that attempt to persecute and destroy the Christian church. That is to say that she uses political power structures in her attempt to destroy the church. Listen to what John says about the Whore of Babylon. He says:

3 For all nations have **drunk the wine** of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have

committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; 5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. (Revelation 18:3–5 ESV)

In the Revelation of John Christians are WARNED against the demonic seduction of culture – DON’T DRINK THE WINE of her sexual immorality; DON’T DRINK THE CULTURAL KOOL AID – STOP LISTENING TO HER. STOP READING HER BOOKS AND WATCHING HER TALK SHOWS LEST YOU BEGIN TO THINK AND SPEAK LIKE HER AND SHARE IN HER SIN AND HER JUDGMENT. Come out from her and be sober minded.

Lastly, Peter tells folks to prepare for final judgment:

5. By standing firm in the faith and resisting the attacks of the devil

Like John, Peter mentions a beast – a lion in this case – who represents the devil, who is our adversary and who wants to destroy the church. He says in the second half of verse 8:

8 Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith (1 Peter 5:8–9 ESV)

You have an enemy – the apostles say – the devil is a beast, he is a lion and he wants to destroy you. He wants to seduce you, he wants to intoxicate you and he wants to lure you away from their faith in Jesus Christ and into spiritual and eternal ruin. Be AWARE OF THAT brothers and sisters and RESIST HIM. Resist him by standing FIRM IN YOUR FAITH.

Did you hear that? Christians WIN by standing. We withstand the devil, we survive the final judgment and we inherit the Kingdom of our Father – that’s what’s on the line here. And again, Peter isn’t making this stuff up – he is just repeating and applying things that he heard Jesus say. Jesus said:

And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Mark 13:13 ESV)

That’s what this whole letter has been about! This isn’t new content at all! This is just Apostolic

application. Peter is saying to these people – do not think you can DODGE the hatred of the world. They hated Jesus – so they’re going to hate you too. If you believe what he believed. If you say what he said. If you live like he lived. If you take up your cross and follow him – then you’re going to go through what he went through – but thanks be to God – you’re going to rise up like he rose up and you are going to go on into glory like he went on into glory.

That’s the path.

That’s the Jesus WAY.

So what we need to do, brothers and sisters, is simply stay the course.

We need to STAND FIRM and STAND TOGETHER. Peter says:

knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.
(1 Peter 5:9 ESV)

You’ve got to stand together – and you have to stand with your fellow Christians who are being persecuted in Nepal, in China, in India, in Pakistan and in Egypt – because that how you WIN!

We win by holding on to Christ and by holding on to one another!

So now is not the time, brothers and sisters to change what we believe.

Now is not the time to change how we behave.

Now is not the time to change how we do marriage, gender or sexuality.

Now is not the time to give up hope, pack up shop and run away.

Now is not the time to go it alone, to give up on the church or to give up on one another.

Now is the time to stand TOGETHER, to STAND FAST and to STAND FIRM in the faith once

for all delivered to the saints.

Persecution will come – for some it already has. We will suffer on our way to glory – because we are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ – but do not LOSE HEART brothers and sisters because:

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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:10–11 ESV)

To the saints in Bithynia Pontus as to the saints in Orillia, Ontario Canada – this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God. Let's pray together.

N.B. In my closing prayer I will probably say something like: “Lord we’ve talked a lot today about holding on to Christ no matter what comes, but I know Lord that in a gathering of this size there will be people who have never taken hold of Christ in the first place....”