

We are nearing the end of our study in 1 Peter where we have seen many truths about the Christian faith and the Christian life. I will summarize it more when we conclude our study next week, the first Sunday in Advent.

We saw last week that Peter addressed to the shepherds – the elders – of the local church and the type of example with which they were to lead..

As he continues towards the conclusion of his letter, he gives his readers, and us, some final exhortations, and in doing so tells us the root of all Christian persecution. Remember, he is writing to those who have been persecuted because of their faith in Christ. Turn with me to 1 Peter 5:5-11 (READ).

He begins these final exhortations by addressing the younger people in the church – 5 *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders...”* If we take this in context with the previous verses that we looked at last week, it would seem that Peter is talking to those who are not the elders of the church, that is, the lay people of the church.

And we see that he tells all to submit to the elders ... the Pastor/shepherds of the church. We remember that the local Pastors, at that time, were appointed directly by the Apostles themselves. The Apostles knew that they would not be around forever, so they appointed Pastor/shepherds to lead the local church. These Pastor/shepherds were taught and examined by the Apostles to see if they were able to shepherd the people.

The same thing is true today. When I first desired to go into the ministry, I was examined to see if I was capable of leading and being a Pastor. Just because it was something that I felt called to do, it was the “church” that identified my gifts and it was the church that ordained me to the ministry, to be a Pastor/shepherd.

It is to those under these Pastor/shepherds, both in the first century and now, that the people were to submit to their authority and their leadership. We saw last week that the shepherds were not to lord it over the sheep of the church, but to be examples of to church and to lead and teach them faithfully and Biblically.

If those under the shepherd do not submit to their leadership, then problems arise. In many churches this had been the norm. (As was the case for me many years ago). What you sometimes have, especially here in the U.S., is a church calling a Pastor/shepherd to lead them and then saying, “this is how we want you to lead us.” That is not the way it is supposed to be. The sheep are to submit to the loving and faithful leadership of the shepherd.

But, as we see, Peter does not end there: 1 Peter 5:5: *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”*

Even though there is an order – the Pastor/shepherd and then the sheep, that is, the congregation – we are all to submit to one another – there is not to be any pride in us. And Peter gives us the reason: *“for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”* This is a quote from Proverbs 3:34.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about pride. A few examples: Proverbs 8:13: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.” 11:2: “*When pride comes,*

*then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.” 16:18: “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.” 21:4: “A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.”*

There are a lot more in Proverbs, and indeed all of the scriptures about the sin of pride. The point is, that pride is an abomination to God, and that is why Peter goes on in the next verses: 1 Peter 5:6,7: *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”*

Pride is the spirit that says “I can do it myself”. Pride is the spirit that says I don’t need God. Pride was at it’s root in the sin of Adam and Eve. But Peter tells us to humble ourselves before God and to cast all of our cares on Him because He cares for us. We worry because we are proud and not humbling ourselves before God.

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”* And our Savior himself said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:25-34: *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

Again, the thought of submitting ourselves to God – and then we will not be anxious ... we will not worry and we will not be proud.

Now, as Peter gets closer to the end of the letter, he reveals the source of the persecution of Christians and what we are to do. 1 Peter 5:8-9: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”*

What Peter is saying is that we need to be clear-minded and always on the look-out because our adversary, the devil is walking about like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. We have to remember that we are always open to the attacks of the devil. The devil looks for our weak spots, and attacks us there. And if we are not clear minded and always on the lookout, Satan will succeed.

As we read in Ephesians 6:10-12: *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

So we have to look for him and the subtle ways that he wants to attack us. We’ve all see the pictures of a

stalking lion. Anyone who has cats knows they same, how they move quietly waiting for the right time to pounce, to devour something, or in our case for one cat to go after another. They are like little lions.

And that is why we are told to “*Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*” If we suffer persecution for being a Christian, we know the Christians are suffering all over the world, and that suffering is caused by Satan.

He then ends this section with a blessing and an ascription of praise. 1 Peter 5:10-11: “*But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*”

As we go through our lives here on this sinful earth, we know that we not alone. God, through His Holy Spirit is with us. He will enable us ... He will strengthen us ... He will sustain us as we face the various issues of our lives.

Regardless of what happens we have His promise. As God promised Moses and Joshua, and also quoted in Hebrews 13, we read in Joshua 1:5: “*No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.*” God will never leave us or forsake us.

And that is why we have the concluding words, with the ascription of praise – *To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* We sing, To God Be the Glory, great things he has done. We sing, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

We know that our God is with us to help us win against the attacks of Satan, and that we can stand firm in the faith. Praise be to God and to Him alone be the glory.