

# 1 Peter 5:1-14

## *Special Admonitions*

### SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS and MAIN THOUGHTS

Nearly all of the apostle's thoughts and concerns have already been dealt with. Peter concludes his letter, but not before he once again places before himself the congregations in their struggles and difficulties. In the first place he thinks of the elders whose task of leading and guiding the flock is doubly difficult in these times of tension and oppression. They have to carry out their tasks compelled by the divine call to radiate the glory which he, who has called them to their office and who is holy, demands especially of them (cf. 1:15,16).

Next Peter's thoughts almost automatically go toward the younger men who must demonstrate that they are set apart from the world by submitting in faith to their elders.

The writer ends his letter with some general admonitions to the congregations as a whole. He concludes with a short note about the letter itself and his purpose for writing it, and with the customary greetings and blessings.

### NOTES ON THE TEXT

#### *Verse 1*

Some translations have "the older ones", in place of "the elders". Even though the first meaning of the Greek word *presbuteros*<sup>1</sup> is "the older ones", the translation "the elders" is the preferred one because office-bearers are undoubtedly meant here — [see question 1](#) and [question 2](#).

"Therefore" [NASB], "so" [RSV], indicates that Peter derives the special calling of the overseers from the general admonition to the believers to lead a holy life.

"Among you" points to the various congregations which have their own elders — [see question 3](#).

"Witness" here means, in the first place, an "eye-witness" (cf. Acts 1:8; Acts 3:15; John 15:27), and in the second place, a "partaker in the sufferings of Christ"<sup>2</sup> (in the sense of Colossians 1:24). This second broader meaning does not have to be excluded since Peter considers himself also to be a partaker of the coming glory.

#### *Verse 2*

The Greek verb for to "shepherd", actually means "be a shepherd to". According to the Scriptures, this consists of various elements: leading and caring for (Psalm 23); protecting (Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:5; Micah 5:4); and ruling (Isaiah 63:11) — [see question 4](#). The Greek word for "flock" is derived from the word for "shepherd". "That is under your care" indicates the place where the shepherding must be done – "in your midst".

"Because you must" and "under compulsion" [NASB] refer to the motive of the overseers in executing their tasks (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16-18). The fervent desire to serve the Saviour, as elder, "according to the will of God" [NASB] must be the driving force of their work as office-bearers.

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<sup>1</sup>The name "Presbyterian" is derived from this word "presbyter."

<sup>2</sup> Greek: *martus*, from which our word "martyr" is derived.

"Greedy for money" means for the acquisition of material goods — [see question 5](#). "Eager to serve" refers to a pure, disinterested urgency of the heart to do what is right.

### **Verse 3**

"Domineering over" [RSV] means "lording it over". "Those entrusted to you" or "the inheritances" are the congregation entrusted to the elders in accordance with God's pleasure. The Greek word<sup>3</sup> for "inheritances" actually means "lot" or "a portion received by lot" (cf. Acts 1:17, 25).

"Being examples" implies "continuously becoming examples".

### **Verse 4**

Christ is "Chief Shepherd". The elders know from this that they are "under-shepherds".

The "crown", or actually a "wreath", is an image from the world of sports. Winners received an amaranthine or everlasting wreath which never faded. The "crown of glory" is a crown which is the glory.

### **Verse 5a**

For the word "elders" [NASB], one should think of age or "older ones", not only overseers. Peter does not admonish the elders to submission, but rather, he admonishes them to be humble and self-denying in their service. He instructs the younger ones to behave "in the same way".

### **Verse 5b**

Peter now directs his remarks to everyone in the church. Verse 6 should have started here. The Greek verb for "clothe yourselves" is derived from a noun which means "band" and from another related noun which means "apron" (or "overall"). Slaves often wore such a garment over their clothing. The apron symbolises meekness and lowliness of heart (see Outline 5 on 3:8). See also Ephesians 4:2; John 13:14 ff. The rest of this verse is a quotation of Proverbs 3:34.

"The humble" can mean "lowly" in the sense of low rank (cf. Luke 1:52; James 1:9), but here it means "humble of heart" (cf. Matthew 11:29).

### **Verse 6**

"God's mighty hand" is a much-used image in Scripture. Peter means to say: all oppression and pressure comes to you from God's hand. By humbling yourselves "He may lift you up" or "exalt you" [NASB] (cf. 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7). However, this exaltation may never be our motivation for self-abasement — [see question 6](#). Peter indicates that there is no other way, or other possibility, to be exalted.

### **Verse 7**

To understand the phrase "all your anxiety", see the reference to Psalm 55:22; Matthew 6:25; Philippians 4:6. The Greek verb for "casting" indicates "removing it from oneself completely". "He cares for you" means "he is heartily concerned about you"; God's heart is a Father's heart.

### **Verse 8**

Peter warns them, "be sober, be watchful" [RSV]. (See Outline 3 on 1:13 and Outline 8 on 4:17.) An "adversary" is an opponent in a court of law (cf. Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10). The

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<sup>3</sup> Greek: *kleros*, from which is derived "clergy".

"roaring" of a lion is a sign of his hunger and voraciousness.

### ***Verse 9***

To "resist" is a word used for a warrior (cf. Ephesians 6:10-17). "Knowing" means providing encouragement.

"Are being accomplished by" [NASB] is a better translation than "is required of" [RSV]. We must not consider this suffering to be to the detriment of believers.

### ***Verses 10 and 11***

"In Christ" indicates both "called by Christ" and "in that being called, tied very closely to Christ". "A little while" is a short time. The sufferings do not precede the calling, but rather the inheritance of the eternal glory. "Restore" or "perfect" [NASB] can be translated in different ways. Some manuscripts use the verb form which expresses a prayer; many others use the verb form which indicates the future. Most likely the latter is the original meaning. Therefore, this is not a prayer, but a promise. In verse 11 Peter intends to fix the readers' attention on God's power which enables them to live up to his expectations.

### ***Verse 12***

For this verse see Outline 1, the third section. All the admonitions in this letter are summarised here in the expression "this is the true grace of God"; that is, our suffering for righteousness' sake is not something foreign to the Christian life but suffering is for our eternal salvation. "Stand" means to stand firm (in that true grace).

### ***Verse 13***

Some think that Peter is referring to his wife when he says, "she who is... chosen together with you". However, just as in other places in the letter (1:1; 1:17; 2:11), he speaks metaphorically. Here he means the congregation in "Babylon" (for this name, see Outline 1, first section). "My son, Mark" is also used figuratively. This was his spiritual son who owed his conversion to Peter (cf. Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39). Mark was Barnabas' cousin (cf. Colossians 4:10).

### ***Verse 14***

The "kiss of love" was very customary in the East and has no ulterior connotation.

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Can you prove from the context that "elders" in v.1 refers to office-bearers?  
(cf.
  1. What Peter calls himself.
  2. What Peter admonishes them to do. (See vv. 2,3.)
  3. Whom they are to shepherd. (See vv. 3, 4.)
  4. What Christ is called here. (See v. 4.))
2. What distinction was later made concerning the original office of overseer? (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17; Revelation 2:1; 8; etc., in the seven letters.)
3. In the imagery of the golden lamp stands, how is it evident from Revelation 1:12 & 20 that in the New Testament dispensation each local congregation is independent, and no longer one national church?

4. Where in Scripture is the image of the shepherd applied to God himself (cf. Psalm 23:1; 80:1)? Where is it applied to the Saviour (cf. Ezekiel 34:23; John 10:11, 14; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4)? Where is it applied to overseers (cf. Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11)?
5. Were there any opportunities for the overseers to become wealthy (v.2)? (See Acts 4:34-35; 11:30; also Titus 1:11; 2 Corinthians 12:16-18.) What is the sin of "simony" mentioned in Article 72 of the Church Order, and from what story does this word originate?
6. How does the Roman Catholic church apply verse 6?

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