

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Peter's First Epistle

Chapter 5

Have you ever witnessed any of your friends suffering a few hours before they were going to die? Peter was an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ. It was something that he would never forget. In Matthew 26 vs 36-38 we read that Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane:

“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray”. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be very sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me.””

Peter, along with James and John, experienced the suffering and agony that Jesus felt in the hours before He willingly went to the cross of Calvary. I believe this experience left a mark on Peter's life and ministry.

Peter not only witnessed the sufferings of Christ; he had earlier witnessed the radiant glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Luke 9 vs 27-36 is one of the three accounts in the Bible of this incident. The Lord took Peter, James and John up a mountain to pray. As Jesus prayed, His appearance changed, His face was altered, and His clothes became dazzlingly white. Peter, James and John had fallen asleep, but when they woke, they saw the glory of the Lord and two other men with Him. A cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were very afraid. While in the cloud they heard a voice saying: “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him.” It was God Himself declaring His delight in His Son. The three disciples fell on their faces and when they looked up, they saw only Jesus. Dear friends:

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in His wonderful face,
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
in the light of His glory and grace.”

Helen Howarth Lemmel 1863-1961

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about this experience until He had risen again from the dead. I also believe this experience left a mark on Peter's life and ministry.

God the Father loves His Son and He loves the children of God to the same extent. Every true believer is a child of God. In John 17 v 11 the Lord Jesus prays to His Father and asks Him to keep and protect His own after He leaves the world. A child of God is in a wonderful circle of love and is very precious to the Father and the Son! Romans 8 vs 16-18 speaks about the suffering and the glory of the children of God:

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider

that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

The apostle Paul who wrote those words knew what it was to suffer for Christ. He also saw the glory of the Lord at his conversion on the Damascus road.

I like Peter! He is a real encouragement to me. He was a fisherman. He was a man of action, a man full of energy. He was a doer; he got things done. He was quick to speak, sometimes too quick! He let the Lord down, but he really loved the Lord. Peter had to learn many bitter lessons in his life. Peter was quick to confess his sins and then he continued to serve the Lord and His people. Peter recognised how precious the flock of God are to the Lord. He recognised his responsibility in this work. Addressing the elders, Peter recognises himself as a fellow elder. Even with all his experiences with the Lord he was a humble man. It also could be said that when Peter said he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, that he was thinking about his soon coming martyr's death.

Naturally every sheep and every lamb are precious to the shepherd. The Bible often portrays us as sheep. Peter writes that the job of an elder is to feed the flock of God and to exercise oversight. The flock of God is very precious to Christ, every baby, every child and every adult. So the work of an elder is a very responsible one. And it should also be a privilege to do. The work must be done willingly, eagerly, but not under any compulsion. The elder should not try and dominate the flock or lord over it as his own possession. He must not do it looking for any kind of payment in this world. He must be ready to be humble and to serve the precious flock of Christ. Peter knew only too well the love the Lord has for each believer. He saw the death of the Lord for His flock first-hand. The Lord expects the elders to serve, teach, love and care for His flock. Peter was an example of this.

The Bible speaks about the Lord Jesus as a shepherd in three ways.

1. John 10 v 11: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."
2. Hebrews 13 v 20: "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep."
3. 1 Peter 5 v 4: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you shall receive the unfading crown of glory."

Jesus Christ, dying, is the Good Shepherd. On the cross He gave His life for the sheep. He loved His sheep and he died on their behalf. Because of His death He is the door (or the entrance into blessing). Jesus Christ, our risen ascended Lord, is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He loved the Church (which is every true believer), and He bought it with His blood. He has a right to pastor His own flock. Whether you are a pastor, teacher, evangelist, elder or deacon, you are an under shepherd. You are a servant of the flock of Jesus Christ, which is quite a responsibility which must not be taken lightly. Jesus Christ, coming again, is the Chief Shepherd of the flock. When He comes, He will lead His flock to everlasting pastures. In Luke 12 v 32 the Lord said: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." You can see why Peter felt the responsibility of taking care of the precious flock of God.

We must say something about "the unfading crown of glory." The Bible tells us that believers will receive crowns in a future day. Rewards will be given out by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself after He has reviewed your life as a Christian at the judgement seat of Christ. You will be rewarded for your faithfulness and for what you have done for Christ. Both Romans 14 v 10 and 2 Corinthians 5 v 10 explain this. There are many different rewards mentioned in the Bible, but I believe the crown of glory will be given to under shepherds, those who have faithfully served the flock of God.

Verse 5 underlines your behaviour towards each other member of the flock. Whether you are older or younger, you need to be humble. If you are younger, you need to respect your elders. If you are older you need to be kind and thoughtful to the young ones. In fact, every one of us needs to respect each other. You must treat everyone like the Lord treats you. You only need to look at the Lord Himself and His humility when He washed His disciples' feet. He even washed the feet of Judas, knowing that he would soon betray Him. The Lord showed true humility. You must be careful not to show fake humility as the Lord knows the thoughts behind your actions. Pride is a sin! God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. You need the grace of God throughout your life as a Christian.

Verses 6-7 are great verses. The heart of man can be filled with pride. Pride comes in different ways. I believe here there is the thought that we can cope with the things of this life ourselves without the help of God. It is so easy to do things in our own strength without acknowledging that we need God's help in everything. David first went to meet Goliath with Saul's armour on; that did not work! It was only when he went in the name of the Lord of hosts that the giant was defeated. We all need God's help every moment of every day. It is not easy for a proud man to be humble, but God demands this. It is for his good. Do you realise the powerful resource you can tap into if you humble yourself? It is humbling yourself under the mighty, all powerful hand of God. God wants to be able to help you, guide you and use you for His glory in this world. He does not want to beat you down with a big stick; He wants you willingly to consider yourself as a humble servant of Jesus Christ. And like Jesus you will be exalted in due time. He wants you to cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you. You may be depressed and feel worthless. Dear friend, you may not have anyone in this world to whom you are free to unburden yourself. But you have an amazing God who loves you and does not want to see you anxious, worried or distressed. He cares for you. Let me say that again. The God of heaven and earth cares for you! Take hold of this fact; build your life on it and rejoice in it.

Verses 8-9 bring a warning. You have the mighty God on your side, but the devil who is God's arch enemy is always looking for that opening when you are weak in faith because he wants to take you down. There is real danger here. Until the moment we leave this world, the devil will attack the Christian. Why? Because we belong to Christ. Here the devil is likened unto a roaring, hungry lion who walks about looking to see whom he can devour next. We are encouraged to be sober, that means not to be drunk, not to allow our senses to be weakened because of alcohol. You must always keep your wits about you, be watchful and constant in the faith. James 4 vs.7-8 gives us a similar message:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." James goes on in v 10 of the same chapter to say; "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you."

Resisting the devil cannot be done in our own strength; it must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Every Christian has this battle. It is a spiritual battle ground and we are caught up in it, but the Almighty God, our Saviour who has already defeated the devil, will keep and sustain all those who belong to and rely upon Him.

Verses 10-11 are of great encouragement and begin with one of those special "buts" in the King James version:

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Grace is something totally undeserved which we receive from God through Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 8 v.9:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich."

We see God's grace in initial salvation where we are not only forgiven, but we are given every spiritual favour in Christ Jesus. Grace is God's favour toward us, favour we do not deserve. God also gives us grace as we need it to cope with every circumstance life throws at us. 1 Timothy 1 v 14. "The grace of our Lord overflowed (or was poured out) for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." Peter in his life knew the grace of God.

Think about how Peter must have felt when the Lord looked on him after he had denied Him for the third time! He was distraught; he went out and wept bitterly, he had let the Lord down. He never ever imagined he could have done such a thing. But the Lord knowing Peter forgave Peter and poured out His grace upon him. Peter could have taken the attitude of wallowing in self-pity and never ever freeing himself from what he had done. The Lord was gracious and used Peter. He was the first apostle to preach to the Gentiles and Peter's main ministry was to the Jews. And more than this, we in 2020 are learning from Peter. What a gracious God we have!

Every experience Peter had in his life was allowed by the God. Every experience was for his training. It was to equip him in the service God had planned for him. It was to make him stronger in his faith. It was to make him rely upon the Lord more. Peter was a strong-minded man, but God wanted him to be a humble servant of Jesus Christ. Just like Peter, you too may have suffered as a Christian in many ways. God allows this for our own good and He gives us grace to cope with it. James 4 v 6: "But he gives more grace." Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." I noticed a poem in a friend's house recently. Please let me quote the first two verses.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;
to added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
to multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
when our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
when we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
our Father's full giving is only begun.

Annie Johnson Flint 1866 - 1932

God has called you to His eternal glory in His son Jesus Christ, so He will not let you down. If you feel you have let the Lord down in the past (like Peter), please be encouraged to go on and serve Him. And don't worry, He will never ever let you down. Give God the glory. Give Him your life, your time, your worship and your praise. The verse ends with: "To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

In the final few verses of 1 Peter 5, the Apostle gives his final greetings to the scattered Jewish Christians but takes time to mention two men. One is Silvanus (whom I believe to be Silas) and the other is Mark. Silvanus suffered with Paul in the jail at Philippi; he was beaten, and his feet put in stocks. He sang praises unto God in that night of pain and suffering. He knew what suffering for Christ meant and could equally sympathise with his brethren. But Silvanus needed encouragement too. Peter encourages him to stand firm in the true grace of God. Dear friend, it is not just you who needs encouragement. Encourage the leaders in your church; your pastor, teacher, evangelist, youth worker as they all need encouraging. Peter also sends greetings to Silvanus

along with the church in Babylon. Peter was soon to be martyred but he knew that this suffering was only for a short time and glory would follow. Our years in this world are only a fraction compared with the time we will spend in the eternal glory with Christ.

Peter draws his letter to a close with an exhortation to "Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ." The kiss of love was a symbol of mutual affection. The peace was every kind of peace (or blessing), especially peace with God, and freedom from fears, agitation, passions and moral conflicts. Peter underlines his message from earlier in the chapter about your behaviour towards other Christians.

Peter witnessed Christ suffer and he saw His glory. The Bible tells us of the Lord's obedience to His father. His sufferings at the hand of God. He was the only suitable sacrifice for sin and He willingly laid down His life for you and me. Serving Christ brings suffering. Moses is the only man recorded in the Bible to have chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God. But being a true servant of Christ will bring glory. Dear believing friend, humble yourself under the most powerful hand of God. He is also a loving and caring God. Dear friend, cast all you care and anxiety upon Him because He cares for you!

May God bless you. Amen'

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Peter's First Epistle Chapter 5 talk number 1138.

The English Standard Version of the Bible has been used throughout this talk. There is one reference taken from the King James Version.

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