

1 Peter 5 • A Final Word

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So, everybody, if you would please open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 5. We're going to finish our study of 1 Peter this morning. It's not a terribly long chapter, so we're going to be reading through this one. Let me do that. You follow along.

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. (ESV)

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we dig into the scriptures this morning, we pray that you would open our spiritual eyes, our spiritual ears, that we might see and hear from these verses what you would desire to show us and speak to us about. Lord, we rely completely on you knowing that it is through the spirit these spiritual truths are discerned and understood.

Help us Lord, also to put things into practice in our lives that we learn today. We ask it in the name of Jesus our savior, amen. Amen. Amen.

This final, you'll notice as we read through here this final chapter of Peter's first letter is filled full of all kinds of exhortations and reminders, and he begins by exhorting those who are in positions of leadership in the church. This is important, if you're not in a position of leadership like he's referring to, it's important for you to see these things anyway. You need to know the kind of leaders that God has equipped and what He expects out of those people.

And so Peter begins to talk to the elders. You'll notice in verse 1 he says, "*I exhort the elders among you.*" (ESV) And you'll notice that Peter even goes on to identify himself as such an individual. He says, "*as a fellow elder,*" and then he also refers to himself as a witness. Peter was an "*eyewitness*" here, he says, "*of the sufferings of Christ*" as well as a partaker, he says "*in the glory that is going to be revealed.*" (ESV)

But it's interesting here that he refers, first to the elders, and this was a term that the early church used for people in leadership. We still use it today, and this term is essentially borrowed from the Old Testament. You'll remember when Moses was bringing the nation of Israel through the wilderness on their way to the promised land his father-in-law came for a visit and saw what he was doing day in and day out. All day long Moses was hearing all of the issues and problems and concerns of the people. And his father-in-law said to him, Moses, buddy, you cannot do this alone. You need to raise up some men and you need to get them to help you, to come alongside you.

And so he did. Moses chose several men, like 70 men, and they were essentially put into positions of leadership with Moses, but they were considered elders. This became a traditional sort of a position in Israel, and that term was brought then into the New Testament to speak of leaders in the New Testament Church.

What's interesting about the term elder is it doesn't really tell you what they do. In fact, it doesn't really tell you much at all. The term elder, literally, even in the Greek, just means an older man. Well, that doesn't necessarily speak of leadership. It just means that he's up in years. That's really all it says to you, and that's one of the reasons why Peter then goes through here to give the insights into what this person does, how they are supposed to function.

So, he spells that out in the next verses, and you'll notice he begins in verse 2 by saying, "*shepherd the flock of God that is among you.*" Now when he tells the elders to "*shepherd the flock,*" he's using illustrative language that would've

been commonly understood by the people of that day. I mean, we still have shepherds, I suppose, today, and we have flocks and stuff like that, but not like they did back then.

This would've been a very common sort of an idea. And they knew what shepherds did. We have to learn about it. They just knew it. They knew that a shepherd was constantly on the lookout for the possibility of predators. They had to keep their head on a swivel. They had to keep their attention on the flock, and then they had to be ready to defend the flock should predators arise and come after one of the lambs or something.

A shepherd had to guide the flock to a place where they could get food and water and shelter. He had to tend any of the wounded or the sick sheep in the flock. And they knew that. He had to correct sometimes when there was an unruly sheep in the bunch.

He had to go looking for the lost sheep when they wandered away from the flock, and he had to be very careful to love and to care for them to earn their trust so that they would know his voice and come to them or come to him when he called. Now, that's what physical shepherds who took care of flocks of animals had to do.

But all these things apply to the spiritual shepherd as well. Now the word shepherd in the Greek can also be translated pastor, depending on the context. It's the exact same word. And Peter tells us here that elders are to shepherd the church, taking care of them in all the ways, essentially, that we talked about.

The next description that he gives of an elder, he gives in just two words, "*exercising oversight*." But those two words are made up by just one Greek word, and that is the word that is elsewhere translated overseer. And this is the position that is given to an elder/pastor. To oversee, and that's essentially what the word means. It literally means one who watches over. And that's an important function of an elder.

But Peter is going to go on now in the coming verses, and he's going to describe specifically the role of the overseer. How does he oversee, what kind of things does he do, or should he do as he oversees the flock?

And we're going to, for those of you who take notes and/or are just like me, visual, we're going to put these up on the screen. So, the title is The Function of the Overseer. And remember, overseer, elder, pastor are interchangeable terms in the New Testament.

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The Function of the Overseer

- Not serving under compulsion

But we're going to be talking about the functional role of the overseer, and the first one that Peter mentions here is that an elder is not to serve under compulsion. Right. And basically, this means he must never feel forced or cajoled or constrained to serve in this position. Unfortunately, we've gotten away from the way things, I think, ought to be done in the church. Over the years we've adopted ways of bringing men into positions of leadership that frankly just aren't biblical.

We've brought people into positions of leadership based on popular vote. We get the body together and we're going to vote on some new elders. Whether they call them elders or in the Baptist church, they call them deacons, which I think is a misuse of the term, or they may call them on the board of directors or whatever term they use.

We've introduced all kinds of unbiblical terms, frankly. They are elders, they are overseers, they are pastoring and shepherding the flock. The problem is we've brought people in for reasons that really are more in keeping with this what we're told not to do. And that is, we've brought people in under compulsion and guilt.

“Hey Jack, you haven't been serving around here for a while. Don't you think it's time to start serving the church? We're going to put your name up, for vote for the people” And Jack's thinking, “Wonderful.”

Peter says, don't serve because you're constrained to serve, do it because you're called. This is what we've gotten away from in the body of Christ. We stopped bringing up leaders based on calling. And one of the things that I've learned over the years is that there can be a man in this fellowship who has all of the qualifications for serving in a position of leadership, but he may not be called to serve in this fellowship. He might be called to serve somewhere else, and maybe his time here is spent just filling up on the word and being encouraged, and he's going to go somewhere else and serve. My job is not to pick out somebody who has the qualifications or just to look at people, it's to say, “Are you called by God to serve here?”

Because calling is what we're supposed to be looking at. Right. It's not a popular vote. It's not constraining or making somebody serve because they haven't served for a while. It's recognizing a person's calling.

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The Function of the Overseer

- Not serving under compulsion
- Not greedy or focused on money

You'll notice that next Peter addresses the issue of an elder's motive when he says, and this is our second point, “*not for shameful gain, but rather he's to serve eagerly.*” (ESV) The NIV says, not greedy or focused on money, which is one of the reasons I put that as our description up there. An elder must not be driven by money. It cannot be a focus of his life whether concerning the church or even concerning his own finances. If somebody has money as a priority in their life, it can so easily become a stumbling block.

And Peter says that an elder is to avoid that whole issue by not having money as a focal point of their lives. His motive for serving must be pure. His focus must be on the body of Christ. His focus must be on serving the Lord, not the issues related to money. And once again, this is another thing. A lot of churches raise up leaders because they are good with money.

“He's a good businessman. He brought that business, from, they were about ready to collapse and now they're doing great. They have all kinds of money, let's get him on the church board.” That's not what we're supposed to be looking for. Is he called by God, to serve?

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The Function of the Overseer

- Not serving under compulsion
- Not greedy or focused on money
- Not domineering or controlling

Next, Peter says he's not to be domineering over the flock. We're putting it up here on the list as not domineering or controlling. An elder is a servant, not a master. Please hear me when I say that. Elders are never to dictate how others ought to live. They're to encourage, they are to teach, they are to exhort, they are to pray, but they are not to dictate.

They're not to be controlling and they must not usurp the position of the Holy Spirit. Very important. I don't know how many of you guys were around in the 1970s, if you were, I apologize now for the clothes you had to wear. We all had to, those of us who were there. It's one of the reasons Sue and I don't let anybody see our wedding pictures. Seriously. They're like somewhere put away our kids ask, "Can we see your wedding pictures?" I say, "No. You can't." First of all, it was the seventies. I had long hair, and it was weird.

There was a movement back in the seventies that took hold of the church. Because you see in the late sixties and early seventies, there was a true revival that took place here in the United States of America. It was particularly seen on both the east and the west coast. It was a true revival. We called it the Jesus People Revival. In fact, it's what really birthed Calvary Chapel as a movement. But there were leaders in the body of Christ who recognized that a lot of these people who were coming to Christ and many people were coming to Christ, these people needed to be discipled. And so, they began a movement called the Discipleship Movement, and at the outset it looked really good. Because people do need to be discipled. People do need accountability. People do need to be trained and encouraged, and they need older, wiser, more experienced people speaking into their lives. There's nothing wrong with that.

The problem is, as with pretty much any movement that has ever gotten started in the world, man's sinful nature begins to enter into the equation and things become corrupted. The Discipleship Movement turned into what we later called heavy shepherding. And heavy shepherding was a control that was being put over people's lives.

And in churches where heavy shepherding was going on, people were told who they could and couldn't marry. People were told what money they could spend on things and what they couldn't spend on things, whether they could buy a house or not, whether they could go on vacation or not. They were told these things by their shepherd. Now as you can well imagine, this was an extremely damaging movement.

And the reason is people don't grow when they're being controlled. Our job as leaders is not to tell people what to do, it's to encourage them to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. In fact, I had a guy write to me just this last week, and he had a question about his relationship with his girlfriend and he had several questions he wanted to ask, and then he asked a final question, Pastor Paul, would it be a sin for me to da ta da? And I wrote him back and I just simply said, "What's the Holy Spirit telling you?" That's all I said. He wrote me back and he said, "The Holy Spirit is telling me to wait on Him." Yes. Now, what

would've happened if I would've just said, “Well, here's what you need to do...” See, then he's relying on me. It's like then he is going to keep coming back saying “I've got to go back to Pastor Paul and have him tell me what to do.” That's not what I'm called to do or to be.

It's not what leaders in the church are called to do or to be. We're to point people to Jesus. Point people to His word. Say “You get into the word. You listen for God. You learn to hear his voice.” Whenever there is a controlling element of leadership people don't mature, right? They don't grow up in their faith because they're taught to rely on humans rather than to rely on the Lord.

And that's why Peter says here that elders are not to be domineering, they're not to be controlling. They're not given the task of being the Holy Spirit in your life. That's not their job. So, what are they to be?

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The Function of the Overseer

- Not serving under compulsion
- Not greedy or focused on money
- Not domineering or controlling
- An example to the flock

The next thing Peter mentions is elders are to be an example. That's our 4th point here on our list of functions of the overseer. He is to be an example to the flock and what that essentially means for the elder is that he can't live a private life of anonymity because his life is on display.

His marriage, his family, the way he conducts his affairs, it's like, “Sorry buddy when you come on in a position of an elder, leader, overseer, your life is on display. You are now an example to the flock, even if it becomes negative.” You'll remember that if an elder does something, and this is enough to scare you from ever being an elder, but if an elder does something that is illegal, immoral unbiblical, he's also an example to the flock then too. And the church has to be made aware. That's kind of a scary prospect, but his life is an example, That's part of the calling that is on his life. It's not an easy calling at all, but there are some pretty wonderful promises that go along with it.

And you'll notice in verse 4, Peter lays one of them out. He says, “*And when the chief Shepherd appears, you'll receive the unfading crown of glory*”(ESV). And that's a word specifically given to those people in those leadership positions.

When the Chief Shepherd appears, and by the way, just so you know, the Chief Shepherd is going to appear, and I like that title.

I like that title, Chief Shepherd. It reminds me that I'm not the Chief Shepherd and man, am I glad about that. I mean, I've got to tell you, I'm an under shepherd. He's the Chief Shepherd. And that reminds me every time I see that in the word of God that these are not my people. This is not my church. This church belongs to Jesus. He purchased it with his blood, right? And He says to me, and any other leader, "Hands off. You serve me. You love these people. You be an example to them. You encourage them. You teach them. You love them, but these are my people." And don't you ever forget that He's the Chief Shepherd and He's coming back, and He will reward those who have walked faithfully.

Next, Peter goes on in verses 5 through 7 to talk about those who are functioning under the leaders in the church. And he begins by saying in verse 5, "*Likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders.*" (ESV) Now your Bible may say "be submissive" because that's essentially what it means.

And you might say, well, that sounds a little strong. They're supposed to be submissive to these guys. Yeah, but you see, Peter has already told the elders, you are not to be heavy handed with these people. You are to follow the example of Jesus. Remember that Jesus came along and said, "*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life*" (NIV) Mark 10:45 That's the example that is given to leaders in the church. Once leaders understand that role, now we can safely say to the body of Christ, be subject to the leaders. See, we can't say that safely without first telling the leaders, "Get your hands off these people. They're not yours," right? "They don't belong to you. They're not here just to put money in your pocket or to make you feel good about yourself. They're here to be served."

Now we speak to the people. He says, "*Likewise, you who are younger be subject.*" (ESV) And by the way, in the Greek, those words "be subject," that's what we call an imperative. And what that means is it's a very strong language. It literally means to defer to the authority of another. To defer to the authority of another. Now, again, we can say this now because the elders have been told not to be heavy handed. This doesn't speak, when it talks about deferring to someone else's authority, it doesn't speak of groveling at their feet. It rather, it speaks of a spirit of cooperation. It speaks of a lack of critical attitude, right? It speaks of people who aren't quarrelsome but want to participate and cooperate with the ministry that the leaders have been given and that the people have been given.

You'll remember that the Apostle Paul exhorted the body of Christ in a very similar way in First Thessalonians. He wrote,

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1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (ESV)

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Now, what's interesting about that particular passage is it says that you are to respect those who admonish you. I don't know if you use admonish or if admonish is part of your regular vocabulary, but that means those who rebuke you. That means those who reprimand you. That's not an easy thing to receive from anybody.

Believe me, I know. I'm speaking from experience. I've been reprimanded before. It's not easy to be reprimanded. I don't like being, my flesh does not like to be rebuked, and yet I am to respect those who are over me in the Lord. Well, what does that take? It takes humility. Humility is the character trait that allows people to speak into my life, even when it's hard to hear.

That is why Peter goes on. We're still in verse 5. Read with me. He says, *"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another..."* And then he gives you a good reason why *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Notice he says, you've got to put on humility. Do you know why? He says you have to put it on because it's not there naturally. My flesh does not want to humble itself. It just doesn't want to. It doesn't want to be told what to do, where to go, or what's right. My flesh doesn't want to be told anything. And so, God's word says to me, Paul, put on humility, put it on, and clothe yourself in humility because God opposes those who are proud. It is the proud man who says, "Who are you to tell me what to do?" And if I am being admonished by somebody, I'm going to find all their faults and I'll say, "Well, what about you?"

No. See, that's pride. It stinks. It's rebellion. Humility allows people to speak into my life to say things that are hard to hear. You can even say that to somebody when they're admonishing you. You can look at them right in the eye and just say, "Oh, that's hard to hear." The Lord tells me to put on humility and I need to learn to listen because some of these things can be lifesaving.

He goes on in verse 6 to say, “ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* ” (ESV) Do you understand that pride wants to exalt itself? Pride humbles me. It's pride telling all about me, making myself exalted. But God's word here says, we are to humble ourselves so that God will exalt us in due time.

And that idea of in due time or at the proper time is when we can handle it. Do you know some people can't handle yet being exalted or being brought up to a position where they're going to be looked at by other people as a leader. Because they're just, they're not there yet. At the proper time God will exalt you. Your job right now is just to stay humble, stay teachable, stay open to correction, even when it's hard to hear.

And then he reminds us about trusting God, saying in verse 7, “ *...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you* ” (ESV). I looked up that word casting in the Greek, and it's an interesting word. It means to throw something on someone else. It's kind of like if you were doing backpacking with somebody and it's getting hard, and you go, “Oh man, this is heavy. Here you take this.” And you throw it on them. They probably wouldn't be too happy with you, but that's literally what it means to cast all of your cares on the Lord.

Can I just tell you guys something about God? He's never going to have a problem with you casting your burdens on him. Every once in a while I'll talk to somebody who almost speaks apologetically about having to come to God with their burdens. It's like, “I know God's got a lot of things going on and He's real busy, but...” and I'm like “Are we talking about the same God? Because my God is infinite in power.” And that means it doesn't matter what burdens you've got going on in your life, He's not going to get angry or frustrated with you if you load them onto Him. In fact, He invites it.

Wasn't it Jesus who said, “ *come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden.* ” He says, “ *Take my yolk upon you. For my yoke is easy, my burden is light.* ” paraphrase of Matthew 11:28-30. You go ahead and just take that other burden. You lay it at my feet, you give it to me. I'll take care of it. Sometimes we have such a hard time doing that. “Oh, I know God. You got a lot going on.” He is the creator, God. And even though young men may run and become weary, He does not so cast all your anxieties on Him. Now, there's another interesting word in the Greek it means to be pulled in different directions. That word anxiety means pulled in different directions, and that's what anxiety does to us, doesn't it?

We were created to be pulled in God's direction, but ever since sin came into the world, we're pulled in all kinds of other directions and anxiety does that in our life. Fearful thinking and attitudes and we start running around trying to fix problems and whatever all else when we need to simply come to God. Here's the point. The enemy knows that fear and anxiety are going to distract you from God, and so we need to learn to be obedient to the word of God, to cast our anxieties on Him.

Peter gives us the most perfect reason to do it because he cares. He cares for you. I mean, we could stand to sit and meditate on that one for the rest of the day. He cares. I've gone through times in my life when I'm dealing with people. I've just said, "I just want somebody to care. I just want somebody to care." God cares. Cast all your distractions on Him.

The final exhortation in these verses here in verse 8, goes on to say, "*be sober-minded.*" Do you guys realize this is the third time Peter has said this, made the statement in this short letter. Third time, "*be sober minded.*" And we've talked about what it means. It doesn't necessarily mean don't get drunk. It does mean that, it certainly does, but it goes way beyond that because you can muddle your thinking with many things other than alcohol. Alcohol will do the job quite nicely, but you can do it many other ways, including anxiety.

There's lots of things that you can allow into your life that will keep you from thinking clearly. But he says you need to be clear minded. Why, so that you can be watchful. Why do I need to be watchful? He explains, you have an adversary, you have an enemy. His name is the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion.

And then Peter tells us what the devil's desire is, and that is to devour someone. He's looking to devour. Interestingly enough, that word devour in the Greek means to swallow up overwhelmingly. He wants to swallow up your life. He wants to swallow up your hope. He wants to swallow your faith. That's what the enemy wants to do. Your job is to be clear-minded and watchful, and then when he attacks to know what to do.

What do I do? I hear this all the time. "Pastor I'm just being, we're just being attacked by the enemy right now and I don't know what to do." The Bible tells us what to do. It's in verse nine, and if this is not underlined in your Bible or highlighted, it should be. "*Resist him, firm in your faith.*" That is so important. By the way, this is a defensive measure. "*Resist him.*" The word means to withstand or to stand against. Do you understand people that you now have the

power to stand against the work of the enemy when he attacks in your life? But you can't do it on your own.

You must have faith. You must have a strong faith in order to withstand the enemy. And that's why Peter says, "*Resist him firm in your faith.*" I get emails from people quite often and they'll admit to me, "Pastor, I'm very weak in my faith right now. I've just been through a lot of circumstances and my faith has been greatly weakened."

And I want you to know I take those statements very seriously. And the reason I do is because I know that they're now very vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy because their faith has been weakened. Listen, it's through the shield of faith that we put out those fiery darts of the enemy, but that shield of faith, that's our faith in God, our trust in the Lord. And if that has become weakened through any number of things that may be happening in your life or neglected in your life, you are in a vulnerable place. And I just need to tell you that.

I also had a note from a gal just this last week who told me that the last year, the last 6 months to a year have been really challenging in her life. She said I lost my husband, and then about a month later I lost my mother, and this has happened, and that has happened. And then she just named the, I mean, it was just like a Job experience practically. But rather than just kind of moaning and groaning about it, what she said in her note was, I see now why three years ago

God moved upon my heart to get into the scriptures and build up my faith. She said, all these things have happened, but I'm standing strong. Can I tell you how delightful that is for a pastor to hear? I'm standing strong. All these things have happened, but my house is not being knocked over by the wind and the waves because it's built on the rock and my faith is in Him. My faith and my trust are in Him now.

I think we probably all have gone through periods in our life where our faith seems strong, and then something happens, and our faith doesn't seem so strong after all. And if a single thing can come along and make you feel like your faith is weak, then it really wasn't strong in the first place.

And I get questions all the time from people saying, "Pastor, how can I strengthen my faith so I can stand strong even in times of difficulty?" And I have the exact same answer for every single person. And it's out of the book of Romans, and it goes like this.

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Romans 10:17 (ESV)

...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

There's no shortcut, there's no plan B. There's just God's plan A, and it is, get into the word. And I have to tell you right now, if getting into the word is something you do on a Sunday morning, once a week or maybe a couple of times a month, you are vulnerable. You are vulnerable, and your faith is not going to be as strong as it needs to be in times of attack.

It's just not. This service that we're having today. This is a good thing, but this was never meant to supplant your own personal deep dive into the word of God. You need to be in the word yourself every single day reading the word, even if it's just one verse, and then meditate on that one verse throughout the day.

It doesn't matter. You don't have to read tons. People get so weirded out about what they think they have to do to have a devotional life. Just be in the Word. Listen to it on your way to work or whatever. Be in the Word every single day and your faith will grow. Your faith will grow. That's a promise.

“Faith comes through hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Your faith will get stronger and then whatever you're going through in life, you can withstand it. And after it's all over, you will be found standing firm in Jesus. My faith is in Him. That's why Peter kind of goes on here in verse 9, talking about their suffering that they've been experiencing. He says, the things that you've been experiencing in terms of suffering, these *“...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 (not might, but will) himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”* (ESV)

People that is not just wishful thinking, that is a declaration of God, of what God will do. He will strengthen you. And then Peter gives this beautiful doxology of praise that is just so short. He says *“¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* I don't know if you've looked up the word dominion lately, but you should. *“To Him be the dominion,”* it means control. It means supremacy, it means authority, it means rule, and it's all to Him.

It's not to you. It's not to me, it's not to the government. It's not to the enemy. Even though he may be the temporary prince of this world. To Him, to the Lord Jesus Christ, be the dominion forever and ever. And that's where we have to

live. That's where our faith has to live. And if it doesn't live there, the things that happen in this life will chip away at our understanding and our faith to the point where we have very little or no faith at all.

He says in verse 12, "*By Silvanus,*" (which is Silas. I like Silas better. But anyway, the ESV says 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.* (And then he says these important words) *Stand firm in it.*" (ESV) Stand firm Christians.

Can I say the same thing? We need to stand firm. We need to, if there was ever a time in life that we need to learn to stand firm, we've got to stand firm now. If we don't get firm in our faith, we're going to get knocked down, bowled over, and pulled out of the game. This world that we're living in is out of its mind. The world has literally embraced insanity. And we have to be firm. Firm in what we know.

That doesn't mean obnoxious, by the way, firm and obnoxious are not synonyms. We need to be firm in what we know and understand from the word of God and unmovable. That's what Peter's saying. Stand firm. Don't be moved in what you know and what God has told you in the word.

Don't be moved. Don't be moved. I don't care if somebody comes out and says, "Well, the science tells us..." you stick with the word of God. You're never going to go wrong sticking with the word ever.

Verse 13 says, "*She who is at Babylon.*" All right, I need to explain that. First of all, she is not a woman, it's a church. They would refer to the church as she because the church is the bride of Christ. Peter, and even some of the other authors, like John, did this. He referred to churches as she. And when he refers to Babylon, we believe that was a reference that Peter used to describe Rome because we believe he was in Rome when he wrote this letter. And the new Christians would refer to Rome as Babylon because of the rampant sin that went on there.

But he says, "*She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen,*" in other words, chosen in Christ like you, "*sends you greetings and so does Mark, my son.*" (ESV) This is talking about John Mark and he was not his biological son. He was his spiritual son, just like Timothy was Paul's spiritual son. And John Mark is also the man who authored the gospel of Mark, which we believe was the eyewitness testimony of Peter. So really, the gospel of Mark is most likely

Peter's recollection of what took place because John Mark was a disciple and follower of Peter. An assistant if you will.

He goes on to say in verse 14, "*Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*" (ESV) And with that, we conclude Peter's first letter. Guess where we go next? Yes, Second Peter. That's what we'll get started with.

Let's stand together. We're going to close in prayer. If you need prayer after we're finished here, just feel free to come down to the platform. We'd be happy to pray with you. We've got a prayer team that'll be available. So Father, thank you so much for your word. What a blessing not just to have your word, but to have your Holy Spirit opening our hearts to hearing what it has to say.

And Lord, I'm sure that your word has convicted some today. It has certainly convicted me. We need to be strong in our faith. We need to stop playing games, messing around. We need to be in the word every day, be growing and strengthened in our faith, and we ask you Father to do that. We ask you to give us the strength and the courage to keep on pressing on to know you better every single day.

To grow in our faith, to walk in wisdom, to walk in humility, to be willing to receive correction. Amen. Even when the words are hard to hear, Lord, help us to stand strong, to withstand the enemy and to be a light of truth in these dark days. We ask it in the name of Jesus who is our Savior and all God's people said together, Amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.