

God's grace to a suffering Church 1 Peter 5v1-11

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] 1st Peter chapter 5 verses 1 to 11 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers. Not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be. Not greedy for money, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Young men, in the same way, be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because God approves us the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert.

[1 : 22] Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To him be the power, forever and ever. Amen.

Amen. So now Johnny's going to come up and speak. Do you mind to hand it out?

Yeah, we'll take that. Do you mind to hand it out? Thanks. Thanks, Peter.

Well, please have your Bibles open at 1 Peter. I'm just going to do some adjustments here. I'm a little smaller. And as we look at this, just to remind you that we've been looking through 1 Peter as a series.

[2 : 35] Today, we look at the very last section. If you've missed any, you can follow along on the church website. Under sermons, you can listen to any that are there.

And just to remind you as well that on the table, as you came in, there's the winter program, which will take you through December, January, and February.

And in there are dates for your diary and various things that are happening and coming up in the life of the church. So take a copy, be informed, and be involved, and know what's going on.

And to encourage you as well to come on Wednesday evening. I know it's a scary ordeal to put something through a letterbox. It's not that scary when we're together.

And we can go out and support one another. Of course, you don't just have to pop it in. You can knock on the door as well as we seek to bring God's word to the community of Carragalline. So meeting at our house, quarter to seven on Wednesdays.

[3 : 39] We'd love to see as many as possible who can share in that. Well, let's pray as we look at God's word together. Father God, we thank you for this letter of 1 Peter.

We thank you for the way in which it speaks to us in our lives today, individually and together as a church. Father God, we thank you for the way in which it is.

And Father, our desire is that we would humbly submit to you our chief shepherd. And that we would be those who listen carefully to your word.

That we may be built up and encouraged in the faith. That we would know your grace at work in our lives as we seek to live for you.

So please help us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, the Christian life could be summarised like this.

[5 : 13] We walk through suffering as we wait for glory. We walk through suffering as we wait for glory.

That's been the big message of 1 Peter. If you stand up for Christian values, if you speak up for Christian truth, you will suffer.

People will ignore you. You will be insulted. And for some, they will be persecuted. But if you entrust your life to Christ, if you live for Christ, you will receive glory.

You will share in an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Have a look at chapter 5, verse 1.

As the letter concludes, we come back to this great theme. So chapter 5, verse 1, To the elders among you, I, that's Peter, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings.

[6 : 24] Not only did Peter see Christ suffer, but now as a witness for Christ, he also suffers. In fact, history tells us that within a few years of writing this letter, Peter was put to death for being a follower of Christ.

But not only does he suffer, look at the end of verse 1, he is one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

He will participate in that future glory. Now, walking through suffering and waiting for glory is hard. It's not easy. We know that the journey is tough. So how do people like you and I keep on going through the suffering as we wait for glory?

Well, we need God's grace to sustain us and keep us. Look at verse 10. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

[7 : 50] God's grace is his kindness, his goodness, and his generosity, which is poured out into your life and on your life in abundance, overflowing to us each and every day to keep you and sustain you.

So, we could summarize it like this. This is where we're going this morning in our talk. As we walk through suffering, God's grace will keep you as we wait for glory.

As we walk through suffering, God's grace will keep you as we wait for glory. God's grace is demonstrated in a variety of ways.

We're going to look at three this morning. So, God's grace is shown first in the provision of God's watchful shepherds.

So, verse 1, chapter 5, verse 1. To the elders among you. So, he's writing to the church and he's addressing specifically, he says, to the elders among you.

[9 : 04] Verse 2, be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers or watching over those under your care.

So, God in his grace provides elders to care for the church as we walk through suffering and wait for glory.

First, elders care for the church. The elders of the church are, as we see in verse 2, the shepherds of the flock. It's a wonderful picture, that image, of God's caring provision.

Because sheep without shepherds get into all kinds of trouble. And sheep that separate themselves from the shepherds who live without that caring protection are in real danger.

So, look forward at verse 8. He tells us there, be self-controlled and alert because your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for sheep to devour.

[10 : 19] Now, we're going to come back to this later. But for now, we must see that elders are God's shepherds, God's gracious provision to care for and watch over his people because we've got an enemy who is ready to devour.

That's why we have elders in this church. The elders in this church are Ralph, Jonathan, Alex, and myself.

We are your shepherds. You have been entrusted by God under our care.

Look at verse 2. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care. Verse 3. Not lording it over those entrusted to you.

God in his goodness calls his sheep, that is, the people who love Christ and follow Christ his church to live under the care of his shepherds and entrust themselves to the shepherds.

[11 : 30] And this watching over of the flock is God's provision for you. It's a gift to you and it must be taken seriously.

So let me address the elders because that is what it does here in verse 2. So elders, be shepherds. Jonathan, I know he's not here, he's in creche, but he must take care out of a deep love for the people.

Look at the end of verse 2. Not because you must, but because you are willing as God wants you to be. Always ready and willing.

Never with a sense of duty or resentment because God has placed the welfare of the sheep under our care. Look at the rest of verse 2.

Not greedy for money, but eager to serve. As elders, and particularly myself, and I speak to myself, as I am supported by the church, my goal is not to be financial gain.

[12:43] my calling is not to go around demanding more money, but to lovingly provide for the spiritual needs of the people. I am to nurture you.

That is my calling, to feed you, to nurture you, by speaking God's word freely to you, to help you in your times of suffering. or verse 3.

Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. So Alex, your role is not to crush or suppress with an attitude of superiority.

Instead, together we are to be role models, setting an example of sacrificial service, because God has entrusted the sheep under your care.

This is what God expects of his shepherds, and anything less should not be tolerated, and the church is to hold us accountable to this high calling. Of course, serving as elders is costly.

[13:55] It takes up time and energy and effort, but the rewards are amazing. So, verse 4, Ralph, Jonathan, Alex, those who are elders, look at verse 4, and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

So, you see, God graciously provides elders to care for the church as we walk through suffering and as we wait for glory.

So, the elders care, and second, the church submits. Look at verse 5. Young men in the same way be submissive to those who are older.

Now, the word for older is the exact same word for elder in verse 1. So, the young men are to submit to the elders.

And you think, well, why is he picking on the young men? Why do they have to submit? Well, it seems that in the context here, the whole church is called to submit to the elders, especially the young men, those who are young in the faith.

[15:24] Why? Well, because young men might be tempted to go it alone. You see, nothing has really changed from the first century to 2016.

No one likes to submit to authority. No one likes to take direction or accept advice, especially young men who always think that they know best.

So, let me speak specifically to the young men. Elders are not placed over you to make life difficult for you.

God has entrusted you into their care for your good. That's why we as elders meet together we pray for the church.

We think through issues. We talk about the situations that you may be in and how best we can support you and care for you. Now, of course, the problem is elders can abuse their authority and the church can ignore authority.

[16:31] So, look at the rest of verse 5. all of you, all of you, elders and the church, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

So, elders should humbly serve the church and the church should humbly submit. And if we find that difficult, well, look at the end of verse 5.

God will give you grace. He will help you to work that one through. So, as the elders care for you and watch over you, if the elders should ever challenge you over a certain behaviour, if they should advise a certain direction, if they should ask you to consider serving in a certain way, it's not to cause you harm or difficulty, but it's for your good.

The shepherds are there given by God to provide the best for you. So, God graciously provides elders to care for the church as we walk through suffering and as we wait for glory.

So, that's the first gift of grace that God gives to his church. Here's the second one. The power of God's mighty hand.

[18:10] Verse 6. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

God in his grace powerfully works by or through his mighty hand as we walk through suffering and wait for glory.

He has power over your suffering. In the Old Testament, we read the story of God's people who were in slavery in Egypt.

You remember that story in Exodus? They were suffering under the brutal regime of Pharaoh. But listen to what God said he would do for his people.

Here it is. It's on the screen. You can follow along. Then the Lord said to Moses, now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. Because of my mighty hand, he will let them go.

[19 : 12] Because of my mighty hand, he will drive them out of his country. And when God rescued the people, this is what Moses said later on.

Moses said to the people, commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand.

It's a description of God's awesome power, his rescuing power. Now just as God rescued his people out of slavery and brought them through into the promised land, so God is going to bring you through your suffering and into glory, the ultimate promised land, by his strong and mighty hand.

But as we wait for glory, verse 6, we must humble ourselves under God's mighty hand.

That is, we are to submit ourselves, humbly accept the struggles and the sufferings we go through.

You see, the sufferings that we experience in life are not out of God's control.

[20 : 36] They are under his control. By his mighty hand, by his strong arm, God uses the struggles to strengthen us, to grow us, and refine us as we wait for glory.

As we journey through life, the sufferings are not always removed from us, rather, we are refined by them as God works in them.

So this means we do not need to run from our struggles, but we can embrace them in the knowledge that God by his mighty hand, look at the end of verse 6, will lift you up in due time.

So, verse 7, cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. When we suffer and when we struggle in life as a Christian, we can sometimes feel like God has left us or abandoned us.

We can think that God is not powerful, that he's not able to change our circumstances. But remember this, the God who rescued God's people from slavery in Egypt, the God who parted the sea so that the people could walk through into the promised land, this God, this mighty God will also rescue you.

[22 : 07] Therefore, cast all your anxiety on him. Throw yourselves into the care of God. Entrust yourself to our faithful saving God.

Because there is no safer place to be than to humbly be under God's mighty hands. God's love to God's love to him.

He has power over suffering, but he also has power over Satan. Verse 8, be self-controlled and alert, so have your wits about you.

Why? Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. The devil, or Satan, is not an imaginary force.

He is a real person who stands opposed to God and his people. In fact, behind every insult, and every accusation, and every persecution of God's people stands Satan.

[23 : 25] He is like a roaring lion who seeks to get in amongst the flock, amongst his people. His desire and his intention is to cause followers of Christ to fall away and to turn their backs on God.

However, while we must not underestimate his schemes, we must not overestimate his power.

Satan is an enemy of God and his people, but he is a defeated enemy.

God's mighty hand through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ has defeated Satan. Look back at chapter 3, verse 22.

Chapter 3, verse 22. Here he's been talking about the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus and look what happens after the resurrection of Jesus, verse 22.

He has gone, that is Jesus, has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

[24 : 44] To sit at God's right hand is to be in the position of absolute power and supreme authority where every power, every ruler, every government, every nation sits in submission to God.

Including Satan, all the authorities and powers are in submission to Christ, the risen ruler. that means that Satan can only go as far as God allows.

Satan does not have a free reign in this world. He can only do and go as God allows and permits. He is under the sovereign control of God.

He is a roaring prowling lion but he is a lion on a leash. Satan is under God's mighty hand.

So, verse 9, resist him. I don't know if you've ever tried to resist a roaring lion. I don't think you'd come off very good one-on-one.

[26 : 05] So, how can we resist the roaring lion like Satan? We can only resist him because he has been defeated. And we resist him, verse 9, by standing firm in the faith.

So, we stand against Satan by reminding ourselves of the faith in which we stand. That is the truth of the gospel, the good news of what God has done for us.

You see, it will be your experience if you are a Christian that Satan will tempt you. God is not good. If he's good, then he wouldn't let you suffer the way that you do. What's the point in being a Christian? All you do is struggle and suffer.

Life is going to be much easier if you just keep quiet and turn away from God. Only sinful Christians suffer.

[27 : 09] You don't have enough faith. These are the temptations, the voices that we deal with. Well, don't listen to his lies.

Resist him. Stand strong in the faith. Remind yourself that suffering, the struggles we go through, is normal.

Look at the rest of verse 9. Resist him standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

This is normal for the Christian to struggle. And remind yourself that God's mighty hand has defeated Satan and that he is now in submission to God.

You belong to him. God is with you. So God in his grace is powerfully at work through his mighty hand as we walk through suffering and wait for glory.

[28 : 21] So by his grace he provides watchful shepherds. His mighty hand is at work within us. And then his third gift of grace is the promise of God's eternal glory.

Look at verse 10. And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while will himself restore you and make you strong firm and steadfast.

So God in his grace promises us that he will keep his people as we walk through suffering and wait for glory.

We need to keep perspective. We need perspective as we journey through this life as Christians. Look at the contrast in verse 10.

Did you pick it up? The God who has called us verse 10 to his eternal glory in Christ.

[29 : 46] So we have an inheritance that is never going to perish, never going to spoil, never going to fade. It is eternal. In contrast to our eternal glory, look at verse 10.

we suffer for how long? A little while. Glory is eternal, suffering is temporary.

glory. If you look on the walls here, these white panels that go all the way around, you might not actually be able to see it.

So this is a good illustration, but there's a dot, there's just hundreds and hundreds of dots in each little panel, little holes. If you just take one dot up in the top corner and just imagine that that's your life.

It represents all the struggles and all the sufferings you go through, or maybe what's easier, think of the blocks that are around here. Just pick one block that you can see.

[30 : 53] That represents all your sufferings, all your struggles. That is your life contained in that block. Now look at all the rest of the concrete blocks that are all the way around.

That is a picture of your eternal glory. glory. The painful trials we go through are just for a little while. It's momentary.

It's just a dot. It's just a block. Glory will go on forever and forever and forever. So keep your perspective.

And remember that victory is assured. This is not wishful thinking. the glory that to come is not just kind of some dream.

It is absolutely guaranteed and assured. Let's read verse 10 again. And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you have suffered a little while will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

[32 : 10] There's like four great reinforced concrete pillars that support a house that doesn't fall. So God puts these four reinforced, rock solid, unmoving, unshakable truths into our lives.

Look at the end of verse 10. He will restore you. He will put this world to rights. He will correct every injustice.

Everything that has gone wrong is going to be made right and good again. He will restore you. He will make you strong.

Every struggle that you go through, He will make you strong in that struggle. He will make you firm. Every difficulty that you endure, He will make you firm.

He will make you steadfast. For you want to give up and you feel you can't keep going, He will make you steadfast.

[33 : 19] Four truths that are strong enough to face every storm, every trial and every struggle. God's grace is sufficient. The God of all grace will make you strong to the end.

So whatever you face in life, none, no one and nothing, not even the sufferings we go through, not even Satan himself, will keep you from glory.

The God of all grace will sustain you and keep you. God's grace will keep you as we wait for glory.

Living as a Christian in this world is tough, it is hard, but God in his grace provides us with shepherds to care for his church, to watch over you, to speak truth into your life.

God is powerfully at work by his mighty, strong hand over our suffering, over Satan. And he promises us by his grace the hope of eternal glory.

[34 : 48] Nothing and no one will stop you from reaching your destiny. glory. So, verse 11, it's to him, the God of all grace, the God who created you, the God who saved you, the God who will keep you, the God who will bring you through suffering and unto glory.

To him be the power forever and forever. And all of God's people said, Amen. May it be so. Let's pray together.