

While We Wait as God's Household

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Can I say happy Father's Day? I saw a picture that my kids can relate to. It's on your screens there. It says, Dad, may your Father's Day be better than your jokes. That's my kids in a nutshell.

But today is the one day they have to laugh at my jokes, actually. But today is also one week before stage four restrictions are set to end.

Today's also the day we're all waiting for that big announcement, which is set to come at 12 noon today. High noon, which is rather ominous. But anyway, now, if you're anything like me, then I can't wait for all this to end.

Obviously, compared to many other countries, Australia is very blessed, really, aren't we? But the point is, it's supposedly not that long before stage four is meant to end, where we can see potentially people again.

And while we wait, we need to keep doing the right thing so we don't miss out on it, don't we? Unlike yesterday's protests, I think, I don't know if you heard about these, but on your screens there, there's people marching down Albert Street in the CBD, over 300 of them.

[1 : 22] And then they gathered at the Shrine of Remembrance. And you can see the police out there. In fact, there were riot police and arrests were made.

Now, I sympathize, but I'm not sure that's the wisest way to wait. What's more, even people apparently are still having gatherings which are creating COVID clusters.

I'm not sure that's the wisest way to wait either. Well, today, Peter addresses various groups in God's household on how to wait wisely for our true glorious future.

You see, the end of stage four restrictions may not be all that glorious. In fact, some of them may not even end. But the return of Jesus is set.

Yes, only God knows the date, but the date won't move depending on the number of COVID cases. And when Jesus appears, he will put all things right.

[2 : 27] And we will enjoy a truly glorious, eternal future in a perfect world. Much more glorious than the end of stage four restrictions.

This is our hope and how Peter began his letter. So you can see on your screens, he began by speaking about a living hope, which he talks about being an inheritance that can never fade away. An inheritance kept in heaven and the coming of our salvation to be revealed in the last time. Now, we've heard about our future hope throughout the letter, including just last week.

So if you've got your Bibles there, you might like to look back and have a look at chapter four, verse 17, where we heard that judgment has already begun with the household of God.

Judgment, as we heard, in the form of suffering. And then at the end of time, when Jesus appears, there will be a capital J judgment. That is in the form of punishment for the ungodly and us entering glory.

[3 : 42] Well, Peter returns again at the end of his letter to this future glory. And we can see it in our passage on your screens there in verse one, verse four, verse six, where he's exalted us, which I think is the glory.

And then verse 10 glory again after we've suffered for a little while. So with that future glory in mind, Peter now addresses various groups in God's household on how to wait wisely.

So we don't miss out on glory. And he begins by saying elders are to shepherd. So point one, verse one.

Therefore, to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, who will also share in the glory to be revealed.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care. Watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing as God wants you to be. Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve.

[4 : 51] Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. Verse one actually starts with the word therefore. Not all the English versions include it.

But the idea is, therefore, since judgment in the form of suffering begins with the household of God and will end with our glory, then elders shepherd God's household.

That's the logic. Now, in the Bible, elders can refer simply to those who are older in the congregation. But here it refers to those who lead the congregation.

Because verse two says they watch over or literally, as Barry's version said, oversee God's flock. Of course, the elders who oversee God's people are sometimes elder in age, too.

But this refers to church leaders. Now, this obviously applies to me and the other ministers. But it also applies, I think, to all who lead part of God's flock, whether Bible study leaders, youth group and children's leaders.

[6 : 02] In fact, even parents who oversee their children and bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord could be considered as elders in that context, too.

And so if that's you, then verse two, we are to shepherd those under our care. And to shepherd means to pastor.

In fact, the Latin word for shepherd is pastor. It's why my business card on your screens there has pastor under my name there. And in fact, even though it says senior pastor, that's not quite right. Because verse four in your Bibles, the chief shepherd, the real senior pastor is Jesus. I'm just a little p pastor.

But we are to pastor or shepherd like chief Jesus does. How? Well, by firstly teaching you the Bible.

[7 : 04] Back in chapter one, we heard it was the imperishable word of God that gave them new life. In the beginning of chapter two, we heard that it is the word or spiritual milk that grows us in our salvation.

This is how Jesus himself shepherded. So when Jesus saw the crowds on your screens on the next slide there from Mark chapter six, he saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd.

And so what does he immediately then do? He begins teaching them. And it's why on the next slide, when Christ gives leaders to the church, you notice the pastor is linked with the teacher.

In fact, I think it's actually one role, the pastor teacher. The point is pastoring involves teaching. And so even pastoral ministry should always include pointing people to God's word, reminding them of God's truths.

And so thank you for those who pray for us as pastors and leaders. Do keep praying. And not just for us, though, but for all of the church leaders, whether Bible study, youth group or children's leaders, that we might teach you faithfully God's word.

[8 : 27] And if we don't, then you have permission to pull us up. In fact, I remember Bible study one night. We were chatting for at least 20 minutes, I think it was. And one of the members said, right, that's enough.

Let's get into the Bible. I thought that's terrific. He was pulling me up and rightly so. But then Peter lists three other ways elders are to shepherd using three not but statements.

See, verse two, not because you must, but because you are willing. You see, we could always do with more Bible study leaders here at HCD and St. John's.

But you should never offer to lead out of guilt or begrudgingly, but willingly as God wants you to be. Otherwise, we can grow to resent the job, can't we?

And God doesn't want resentment in his household. Not because you must, but because you're willing. And then the next one, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve others.

[9 : 34] I remember I had a church in Sydney. I was talking to a member of the church who owned his own building company. And I remember the senior minister coming up to us, interrupting our conversation.

He kind of just ignored me and he spoke to this guy. And he wanted this guy to do something at his house for him. And when the senior minister left, this guy turned to me and said, he only ever talks to me when he wants me to do something for him.

I still remember that vividly because I can remember thinking that day, I never want to be like that. Rather, we had to be eager to serve. Even doing those thankless jobs like vacuuming and washing.

Not to avoid talking to people, as I know one other minister did, but because we're eager to serve. And verse three, not lording it over others.

That is abusing our authority to push people around like Israel's shepherds did in our first reading, but being examples to the flock.

[10:39] Sadly, we have people in our church who have come from other churches where they were hurt by their leaders. One told me that they were asked to leave their ministry, that they started and put lots of energy into, and they were told to stop doing it without explanation.

Another one was ridiculed by the senior minister in front of others, not in a jovial kind of way, but in a hurtful way. And another was bullied by a leader after that leader took credit for their work. It's horrible and completely unlike Christ, the chief shepherd. And I take it that's the example we are to be to the flock in verse three, a Christ-like example who humbly came not to be served, but to serve.

And that's the thing I think summarizes all these not-but statements. In fact, Christ-like humility, I think, is the key thing that I look for when people want to lead parts of God's flock.

And so if you're an elder, this is how we are to shepherd while we wait. Teaching, willing, serving, and setting a Christ-like example.

[12:03] Now, sometimes it can be hard, but we're to remember, verse four, our glorious future. When the chief shepherd appears and we will receive, along with all God's people, a crown of glory that never fades away.

But while we wait for that glory, elders are to shepherd, and youngers, point two, are to submit. Have a look at the first part of verse five. In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders.

Now, if elders in the church are those who lead, then youngers are those who are led. And I think youngers includes not just young men, but young women as well.

All those who are led. We are to submit to our leaders. In fact, even I have leaders whom I am to submit to. But like we saw with those other submission passages earlier in 1 Peter 2, there are limits to this.

You obviously don't submit if the leader is telling you to do something that is contrary to Christ. Because Christ is the chief leader whom we ultimately submit to, isn't he?

[13:22] And submitting doesn't mean we're less intelligent or have less worth than our leaders. Because let's face it, I know many of you are smarter than me. And as we saw with husbands and wives, we all have equal worth in God's eyes.

We just have different roles in this context. And so in the church context, we're to submit to our leaders because they're trying to serve us for our good.

So submit and let them serve for your good. It's like what we read in Hebrews chapter 13, which talks about submitting to leaders, making their work a joy and not a burden because that would be of no benefit to you.

Of course, this can require us to practice humility as well, can't it? Particularly if we think we can do the job better than they can. And I think that's why verse 5 begins with the words, in the same way. Just as elders are to shepherd with Christ-like humility, so youngers are to submit with Christ-like humility. Christ who even submitted to his father.

[14:35] So while we wait for glory, elders shepherd, youngers submit, and all yous humbly stand firm.

Have a look at the rest of verse 5. He now says, All of you in God's household, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. You see, we are to all show that Christ-like humility towards one another. Oscar Levant was an American pianist and comedian, and he said on your screens there, What the world needs is more geniuses with humility.

There are just so few of us left. Of course, the point of the joke is that that's not humility, is it? It's pride. Pride puts ourselves first.

Humility puts others first. Which is easier said than done, isn't it? Especially when you're tired and want to relax, or when you really don't want to talk to that person again, or especially when you have so many of your own problems to worry about.

[15:50] Like Peter's readers who were suffering. And that's why Peter reminds us that God will provide. He says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace or shows favor to the humble.

How? Well, by providing care for us in this life, and exalting us in the next. Do you see verse 6 and 7? He says, Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand, that he may lift or exalt you in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. You see, it's not easy to put others above ourselves, especially when we're doing it tough.

And we might be tempted to say, What about me? Well, Peter says, Don't worry about you. Instead, cast your worry, your anxiety upon God, because he cares for you.

And not just intellectually, but practically, by providing for our needs and working for our spiritual good. I love that word, cast.

[16:58] It means to hurl, throw, chuck upon God. One of the things people have been doing during this stage four lockdown, I've heard, is they've been sorting through all their things and throwing things out, cleaning up and so on.

And it can be quite therapeutic to do that, can't it? Unless someone throws something out you wanted to keep. But even more therapeutic is throwing out your worry to God, rather than keeping it and storing it up inside yourself.

For he hears our prayers and he cares for you. He's already proved it by giving his son to die for you.

And so if he's done that hardest thing, will he not then do the easier thing of hearing our prayers, providing for our needs, working for our spiritual good?

Even if we cannot see it at the time. So are you anxious about someone or something at the moment?

[18:10] If you are, then throw it out, cast it, hurl it upon God because he cares for you and will exalt you in due time.

I think that means on the last day when Jesus returns because that's when all of us will be lifted up or literally exalted. And so we can humbly put others first even when we're doing it tough.

For we can come humbly before God casting our worry upon him knowing he will care for us in the meantime and then exalt us at the end of time.

So while we wait all yours in God's household be humble and stand firm.

See verse 8 to 9? Be alert and of sober mind. 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 the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

[19:25] Here we are to stand firm in the faith by being alert and resisting the devil. I may have told you this before but this movie on your screen is called The Usual Suspects I saw a long time ago and has Kevin Spacey in it and the very last line of the movie is at the bottom of the screens and it says the greatest trick the devil ever pulled is convincing the world he doesn't exist and that's even true for some Christians some Christians can forget he exists and so forget to be alert to those temptations but on the other hand some Christians can get too preoccupied with the devil but Peter only mentions him just here in his letter even though he's been talking about battling with sin throughout and so as C.S. Lewis wrote on your screens there are two equal and opposite errors into which our human race can fall about the devil one is to disbelieve his existence as some Christians do but the other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in him so we must avoid both errors and so yes verse 8 he does exist and he is prowling around looking for ways to lead us away from Christ but the way he works is by telling us lies like if God really exists and loves you then he would make all this suffering stop or if God is really in control then he'd answer your prayers the way you'd want now now if we believe those lies then this lion grows teeth and the more we believe his lies the deeper he sinks his teeth into us and the further he drags us away from Christ but verse 9 we can resist him by standing firm in the faith by believing

God's truth not his lies just like Jesus did when he was tempted and if we do then the devil becomes more like a toothless tiger who flees from us for a while and so while he's real and we need to be alert we don't need to fear him for we can resist him even when we're suffering and to help us Peter reminds us we're not alone Christians throughout the world he says are undergoing the same kind of sufferings what kind well suffering for being a Christian that's what we saw last week in verse chapter 4 verse 16 and knowing this helps us doesn't it at knowing we're not alone and that people understand I was talking with someone who was outside Victoria recently and saying how depressing these stage 4 restrictions are becoming and they just said it's not that bad the conversation didn't last much longer after that actually because they just didn't get it but when

you talk to people who do you can sympathize and lament with one another can't you and it's encouraging to know that you're not alone but others get it well so too when we suffer as a Christian what's more

Peter says it will be worth it you see verse 10 11 and the God of all grace who called you into 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 somewhat incredibly did you notice in verse 10 Peter says after you have suffered for a little while has he never really undergone suffering doesn't he know that it feels like it takes forever well yes he does it's just that compared to eternal glory it really is a little while I mean these six weeks of stage four restrictions compared to our whole lifespan really are a little while so how much more so eternity and on that day verse 10 God will restore us strengthen us establish us forever he will make us whole in other words it'll be worth it now this is not pie in the sky when you die you know just wishful thinking no this is certain because remember it's a living hope it's based on

Jesus historical reliable resurrection and what's more on God's power to make it happen you see verse 11 to him to God belongs the power and so while we wait for our future glory all yours in God's household be humble casting your concerns upon God and stand firm in the faith resisting the devil and lastly stand firm in God's grace have a look at the last verses of the letter verse 12 while with the help of Silas whom I regard as a faithful brother I have written to you briefly encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God stand fast in it she who is in Babylon chosen together with you sends her greetings and so does my son Mark greet one another with a kiss of love peace to all of you who are in Christ Jesus and our

Babylon is the name given to all the empires of the world who oppose God here it refers to Rome and so the greetings come from the church in Rome but it's verse 12 I want you to focus on Peter says what he has written in this letter describes the true grace of God grace refers to God's gracious gifts to us who don't deserve it and in the letter we've seen that God's grace has given God's son whose precious blood chapter one redeemed us from the empty way of life and who made us chapter two God's precious people God's A-listers who to proclaim his greatness and chapters two three and four continue to do good and what's more God's grace has been seen in the way that he's given us a living hope as exiles as strangers tourists in this world and how he even uses our suffering to purify us

[26 : 25] God's grace has and will give us all this so stand fast in it how well by remembering it remembering that it's worth being God's person and by relying on it you know relying on God's grace to keep caring for you and providing for us what we need we'll shortly sing a famous hymn and one of the verses on your screens there says through every danger trial and snare I have already come his grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home I'm sure you can guess what hymn that is but you see God's grace will lead us home as we remember all he has and will graciously give us and as we rely on him to keep caring and keeping us and if we do we'll not only make it home to our future glory we'll also know peace that's how

Peter ends his letter did you notice peace to all of you peace we can know by standing fast in God's grace I don't know what today's announcement will mean for our future next week or the week after or when we'll get to enjoy life together face to face again but I do know we have a much greater glorious future than that don't we when Christ appears one we really don't want to miss out on so while we wait let's wait wisely as God's household elders shepherd youngers submit and all years humbly stand firm let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for the letter of one Peter we thank you that it addresses real life situations like the suffering we all experience and and it and it also reminds us of our future glory and encourages us to stand fast and so help us we pray to wait wisely for that future for we ask it in

Jesus name Amen