

Peter ended last week's lesson on public, private and church relationships with a doxology. He either came to the end of that teaching or the end of his letter. Now we begin a new theme, and possibly an addendum or postscript to the rest of the letter. He begins this new section with the appellation '*Beloved*' or '*Dear friends*'. Some commentators think that Peter did not know the people he is writing to, but I contend, although without evidence, that Peter must have traveled through these provinces on his way to Rome, and therefore, knew the believers so well that he could call them dear friends.

**: 12** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* This harks back to 1:6-8. It sounds as though the persecution of the believers is intensifying when he refers to the impending fiery trials. We should not be surprised that persecution of the church is increasing in our country and in the world today. That is the more normal situation, and our peaceful lives are an historic aberration.

**: 13** *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* We cannot say we were not warned to expect suffering and trials for our faith. However, our expected response seems to be beyond our capabilities.

Matt. 10:24-28 *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Matt. 5:10-12 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

**: 14-16** *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler (busybody). Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.* Have any of us ever suffered or been insulted for the name of Christ?

Should Christians consider themselves guardians of public morality (meddlers or busybodies)?

Matt. 10:16-22 *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to*

*courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

*Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

**: 17** *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God...* Is the suffering of these Christians a judgment from God? Or the sufferings the birth pangs of God's new community of saints? Is Peter anticipating the 'great tribulation and the end of the age'?

*... and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? : 18* *And "If the righteous is scarcely saved,*

*what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"* (See Prov 11:31).

An interesting rhetorical question. Is Peter anticipating the destruction of Jerusalem that will take place in 70 AD?

**: 19** *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* The believer has committed his whole being to the truth of the faith. Peter assures the believers that the God they have committed themselves to is the creator of all things.

**1 Pet. 5:1** *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:* Peter is addressing the leadership of the churches. In keeping with the practice of the times, the leaders were to be the older believers, either in age or maturity in the faith, and probably both. We had a venerable Baptist pastor in our congregation who argued in a congregational meeting there was no role for elders in the church. The Baptists tend to have pastors and deacons rather than elders, but at least Peter and Paul saw a role for elders. In Acts 20:17-37 Paul addresses the elders of the church at Ephesus. In 1 Tim 3 he outlines the qualifications of eldership.

**: 2-3** *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; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

Note the three not...but's. Jesus commanded Peter himself to "tend (shepherd) my sheep" (John 21:16). Even so the elders are to care for the new believers.

**: 4** *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.* Jesus is the chief Shepherd (Heb 13:20-21). And Peter assures the believers that Jesus is returning. This is the great hope of the church through the ages.

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**: 5-7** *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.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* The rebellion of the younger against the elders has been with the church from the beginning. Clement wrote of such an uprising in the Corinthian Church only a decade or two after Peter wrote this epistle. There is no evidence that Peter was addressing such a rebellion, but rather, he continues to talk of order in the Christian life - in the political and social spheres, in the home and the church, and now in the leadership of the church. We see some of this tension today concerning the form of the worship service and the choices of musical expression in the church. This is a hot button issue throughout the country.

**: 8** *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* The trials and persecution the Christians are suffering are not due to the people in their communities, but are caused by the devil that is using them as pawns to do his bidding. Therefore, one is to love one’s neighbor, and even one’s enemy, because the real enemy is the devil. The devil has been around since the Garden of Eden, and continues his losing battle against the people of God. Jesus is the true Lion, the Lion of Judah. The devil arrogantly mocks him by pretending to be like a lion.

**: 9** *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* It is easier to resist him if we continually remember that he is the adversary, and giving in to him brings sadness to our Lord. Jesus has won the battle, but we surely are able to slow down his clean-up efforts (Rom 16:20; 2 Thess 3:3).

**: 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.* You, as a believer, are called by God, and he will vindicate his own. You are a necessary part of his eternal plan and you to his glory.

**: 11** *To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

This is the second benediction. See 4:11. This praises God, while the 4:11 doxology praised the Christ.

**: 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.* Silvanus is most likely Silas, who accompanied Paul on some of his journeys.

**: 13** *She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.* Here Babylon is Rome. Could it be USA today? Will the true Babylon be restored before the end times are completed?

**: 14** Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. **41**