



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Peter 5:1-5

“Shepherd and Sheep”

1 Peter

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this evening is 1 Peter 5. We’re going to look at the first five verses. Let’s begin though with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for the time we have together this evening and the opportunity to continue our studies in this great first epistle of Peter and pray that you’d bless us as we study. Instruct us. We come to some instruction that is specific directed to elders, but also instruction that broadens out to include all of us, but at the same time, the principles that apply to the elder apply to all of us.

We’re to seek to serve you faithfully and well in all that we do and all that we’re called to do. May we do that and may we be a faithful people, a faithful flock to you, very active in the ministry and in serving you, by serving one another and being witnesses to the world.

So bless us as we study this evening. May it be a helpful time for all of us. May we learn more about you, about ourselves and what we’re to do. May we be conformed increasingly to the image of Jesus Christ.

Bless our time following this time of instruction as we, again, come to the thrown of grace and seek help in time of need. Bless us now. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] Again, the passage is 1 Peter 5:1-5. Peter writes, “Therefore I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed. Shepherd the flock of God among you. Exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sorted gain, but with eagerness. Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but

proving to be examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

You younger men, likewise be subject to your elders and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

The church and the New Testament is described in different ways in different images. It is the body of Christ. It is the bride of Christ. It's described as God's temple. Peter has described it as a royal priesthood and also describes it as a flock. He does that in our text. Paul also uses that expression of the church, the flock of God. It's not original with either one of them. All through the Old Testament Israel was referred to as God's flock. Psalm 100:3 a Psalmist writes, “We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” Isaiah 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray.”

The Lord used that image also of his followers. He spoke of them as his little flock. In Luke 12:32 he said, “Do not be afraid little flock for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.” The kingdom of God doesn't go to the kings of the earth. It doesn't go to the empires and the mighty men of this world. It goes to sheep. It goes to a little flock. It is a term of endearment. It expresses God's affection, his love for his people. It implies grace. The kingdom is given to them. It's not earned by them and it suggests dependence. It suggests defenseless.

That is suggested from the very nature of sheep and flocks. We know that they are not strong and able to defend themselves by themselves. They need someone to watch over them, someone to care for them, someone to tend to them. So we have that implied just in the fact that they are sheep and that they are a flock.

We have that also indicated from the Lord's encouragement that he gives to them. He says, “Do not be afraid.” Well that suggests a weakness on their part. It's a small flock in the midst of a mean world and one would expect it to be afraid in that kind of situation, but it doesn't need to be afraid because the flock has a father, the Lord God. So it's not defenseless. It also has a chief shepherd.

That's what Peter calls Christ in our text in verse 4. The church has under-shepherds, elders. Men who look after its welfare who seek to protect it, who seek to nourish it spiritually. That is the topic that Peter takes up in our text in chapter 5, the shepherds and the sheep, the church and how it is to function.

He doesn't say everything that can be said on this subject. No author of the New Testament does, but Peter does say a lot that is very important. Very important about the function of the church.

It follows from what he has written in chapter 4. He has spoken there or written there about spiritual gifts. He did that in verses 10 and 11. Then he wrote about persecution. One of the main subjects of this epistle, but that was the main subject that chapter 4 concluded with. That of persecution; verses 12 through 19. The word therefore in verse 1 of chapter 5 connects us, connects this chapter, connects that verse with the previous context. Peter is drawing an inference from it. He is drawing an inference from what he has just written.

You'll remember from last week in chapter 4 verse 17 he wrote that judgment begins with the house of God. That seems to have prompted Peter to concentrate on that idea. The idea of purity within the church. That's the purpose of God's judgment is discipline within his house, within the church.

So Peter deals with that in Ezekiel chapter 9. A brief chapter, but one that seems to be the background for what Peter wrote in chapter 4 in verse 17. Peter speaks of the house of God there and that's really the subject of Ezekiel 9. That's the subject of judgment. There was impurity in Jerusalem. So Ezekiel had this vision of what God would do in Jerusalem and he would bring judgment. He would purge that city and that purging, that judgment, the slaughter that would take place in that city as a result of its sin started at the alter in the temple in the house of God. It moved out from the alter throughout the city.

Now Peter may have recognized in that the pattern of God's discipline. It begins in the house of God and in verse 6 of Ezekiel 9 we read that it started with the elders who were before the temple. So having taken up this subject of purity in the church, Peter now speaks to the elders in the church. Seems the logical development from that passage in Ezekiel. So he addresses elders.

He writes, “Therefore I exhort the elders among you.” His exhortation is for them to carry out their responsibilities as elders, which he will state in verse 2 being that of shepherding the flock of God, but the implication from the context is that those who are derelict in their duties, those who do not shepherd the flock, those who are not conscientious and energetic and make a godly effort at doing what they are to do will come under the strict discipline of God.

But before Peter comes to that exhortation so that he doesn't seem to be speaking presumptuously or giving instruction with a heavy hand, he includes himself among them. He actually takes a very humble posture as he speaks to them. He doesn't address them as an apostle, which he could have and would have given weight or authority to the things that he said, but he doesn't do that. He identifies himself with them as a fellow elder.

So he doesn't exempt himself from the instruction that he's giving. He's not lording it over them as he tells them not to do. He puts himself in the same position as they are. He indicates by saying that he's a fellow elder that he is just as responsible to carry out the duties of his own instruction as they are responsible to do that. He is just as liable to discipline as they themselves are.

No one should think of himself or of herself as being above discipline. Not even an apostle is. So Peter has given strong exhortation about that in the latter part of chapter 2 and that carries over into chapter 5.

Peter also describes himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, which may be a reminder that just as the Lord suffered for them, they too must suffer with him. That's something he's already stressed as well in chapter 4 back in verse 13. He said that we share the sufferings of Christ. If we identify with Jesus Christ, whether we are an elder or not, we will suffer the sufferings of Christ. We will go through that.

So he may be hinting at that. He may be alluding to what he's already instructed them about. We can expect that. The church will suffer and, of course, the church was facing that. That was the occasion for writing this letter.

The elders needed to be pure. They needed to be diligent in their task because the church was going to suffer the sufferings of Christ and the suffering church needs strong leadership. It needs elders who are morally and spiritually fit to give leadership.

He adds that he's also a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed. The glory that he's speaking there is the glory of Christ with what will be revealed, manifested when he returns to the earth. So that he reminds us of is the goal. That is what we are looking forward to. Suffering is for the present time. Suffering is very difficult, but it's not the end. It's not the goal. It is a passing feature of life, which is passing away.

Now the goal, the end is glory. That is our hope. So he reminds him of our suffering, but he also reminds him that we have that as our great hope.

So in these statements here in verse 1 about Christ's suffering and glory, Peter may be, seems to be forewarning them on the one hand – some of the best preparation we can

have for any kind of trial is to be forewarned. To know that it's a possibility or to know that it is a coming reality and he forewarns them of that, but also he leaves them with encouragement in order to prepare them for the exhortation he's going to give in verse 2 about their responsibilities.

Again, that was particularly important since the church was facing persecution and needed strong leadership, but having said that, what he has to say is true at all times for the church. There's never a time when the church doesn't need strong leadership. Men whom God has chosen, whom he has placed in a position of authority to do the things that they are supposed to do, God's people always need faithful leaders.

There's a passage in the gospels that brings that out. It's in Mark 6. It's just before the Lord feeds the 5,000 – actually the 5,000 plus, but the multitude there up in Galilee. Mark writes in verse 36 that when the Lord saw the crowd he felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Well they had shepherds. They had the Pharisees. They had the Sadducees, but they were like not having shepherds because they were not good shepherds. They were not faithful shepherds. They did not understand the word of God themselves.

So he looked down upon these people who had not been given spiritual training, spiritual nourishment, who had not been given any of that and he felt compassion for them and he began to care for them. He began to care for them by teaching them. He began to care for them by feeding them and oh, that's a beautiful picture of what is to be done for God's flock, for God's people. They need shepherds to lead them, to feed them spiritually, to look after their needs and to protect them from the wolves that are all around.

Well that's Peter's exhortation in verse 2, “Shepherd the flock of God among you.” The charge that Peter gives is the same one that the Lord gave him at breakfast by the Sea of Galilee in John 21. Christ is the good shepherd. We know that from John 10. So we come to the end of that book as he's about to leave this world. He gives Peter instruction. He gives him the charge to be a good shepherd.

In fact, three times he said that. “Tend to my lambs. Shepherd my sheep. Tend my sheep.” That's the instruction. Those are the charges or the charge that he gave to Peter, but each time before he gave that charge, before he told him to be a good shepherd, he asked Peter, “Do you love me?”

So three times before he tells him to shepherd his sheep he asks if he loves him and the thought seems to be very clearly it seems to be that the Lord was addressing the three

denials that Peter had made. Three times he denied him and so three times the Lord asked him, “Do you love me?” In doing that he allowed Peter to retract those denials. It was an act of shepherding by our Lord. It was an act of restoration by him, but it also indicates something very important, very essential about shepherding, about doing the work of an elder.

I think we can broaden the principle to include any aspect of ministry. How one is to minister. If we are to be effective in whatever responsibility the Lord has given to us, this principle is essential. That is that what we do, whatever our responsibility is, is to be a product of the love we have for Jesus Christ.

Only after Peter confessed his love for Christ does Christ give him the charge to shepherd. Care of the elder for the flock of God will be proportional to the care that the elder has for Christ.

Edmund Clowney who was some years ago the president of West Minister Theological Seminary up in Philadelphia, has written a commentary on 1 Peter and he illustrates that point from a painting by Lucas Crannock who was one of the great artists of the reformation. There was a painting that he did. It's in Wittenberg. It's an altar piece. On this alter there is a picture of Luther on the right preaching and the people are listening to him on the left. Luther's on the right preaching. The people are listening on the left and in the middle is Christ on the cross.

The point that Crannock was making is that worship centers on the cross of Christ. Without it there's no true worship. The people looked not at the preacher who was preaching, but when he preached, when Luther preached, they saw Christ and him crucified. That was the focus.

But Clowney makes the point that we can turn that around and we can see it from the other side. For the preacher to truly minister to the people, for if the preacher to truly love the flock that God has entrusted to him or the elder, the minister, he must first see Christ. He must first love Christ. He must serve him in light of the cross. Christ died for his people. He died for the elect. He died for his sheep. He shed his blood for them and we must love the sheep because he loved the sheep. We will love the sheep if we love him because we'll love what he loves.

I was at a luncheon some weeks ago, couple months ago and a man was introducing a very godly reformed pastor who was going to speak. The man who introduced him was an Armenian minister. He's a very nice man, but he is a confessed

Armenian. That’s his theology. Armenian, as you know, is man centered. It’s bad theology. It’s anti-theology because it’s man centered theology, but a theology that starts with man cannot be a good theology, but this man was a nice man. I’ve visited with him and I know him. He’s a very nice individual. He introduced this Calvinistic minister with very kind words.

He said with some build-up to what he was going to say as the greats compliment, I guess he would say the greatest compliment that he could have given this man was that he loves his people. Now those are good words and a faithful minister of the word of God, a faithful elder, a faithful deacon, a faithful child of God should love the people of God. That’s a command, but those aren’t the best words and those aren’t even the words I was expecting him to hear.

I was expecting him to hear a better statement and what would have been a more truer statement of that man, he loves Christ. A man who loves Christ will love the flock. A man who loves people, well he may just love people and he may stop loving people, but a man who loves Jesus Christ, he will love the flock of God. He will love the people of God. He’ll love the people that Christ loves as well. When a person starts at that point, then everything else takes care of itself.

Now that is what the elder is to do. He’s to love Christ. That’s I think what Peter understood very clearly from the Lord’s statement to him by the Sea of Galilee. “Do you love me?” “You know I love you, Lord.” “Shepherd my sheep.”

Now, that is not the responsibility of one man. In the New Testament the leadership of the church is not invested in the pastor of the church. I probably don’t need to go over this point. Not in this place because you’ve heard this said many, many times, but the New Testament doesn’t teach that idea of leadership. It teaches that there are pastors. There’s nothing wrong with that word. That’s a good word.

Men who do what Peter is instructing the elders to do, to shepherd or pastor the flock. They’re to be like pastors. They’re to be like shepherds. They’re to do that work. So that is what men are to do. That is a duty. It is a gift. That of pastor/teacher.

But it’s not an office and that’s really the issue. The New Testament teaches that pastoral leadership is the responsibility of the elders of the church. That is the office of leadership. There is no office of the pastor in the church. There’s no one man who’s over everything and everybody looks to that one man as the great spiritual leader. The one who

looks out over the flock and tends it and cares for. It’s a group of men. It’s a plurality of leadership.

Now there are two words that are used for that office, the office of elder. There is Presbyteros, which is translated elder and Episcopos. We get Presbyterian from one and Episcopalian from the other. Episcopos is translated bishop or in more recent translations, a more accurate translation is that of overseer. Almost a strict wooden translation of the word itself.

In Titus 1:5 and 7, both words are used interchangeably, but with a different sense. They have a different nuance. They refer to the same office. It’s very clear from that text, but they have a different sense. Elder refers probably to age because it has that idea. We’ll touch on that in a moment in our lesson, but would refer to the dignity of the office, the person holding that office.

Overseer refers more to function. In fact, Peter uses the verbal form of that in verse 2 when he speaks of exercising oversight. As I said, that is not the responsibility of one man. The New Testament church had a plurality of leadership and we see the leader spoken in terms of a plurality. Elders of the church. When Paul meets with the elders of the church of Ephesus, they’re referred to in the plural. They are the elders of the church of Ephesus in Acts 20:17. The church of Phillip, I had overseers and deacons. So plurality of leadership, plurality of elders, overseers, plurality of deacons. Philippians 1:2.

As the word overseer suggests, they were to watch over the flock. They were to act like shepherds watching the sheep, making sure they’re well provided for, making sure they’re protected, making sure they don’t wander off, guarding and feeding God’s people.

1 Timothy 5:17 there is the implication that there are two classes of elders. Those who work hard at preaching and teaching. In other words, they devote their time fully to that responsibility. Well it follows that there are those who don’t spend their time always teaching and preaching. That’s not the main emphasis.

They work outside the church. They have what we call secular employment, but those two types of elders still have the basic same function. Basic function of laboring in the ministry among the flock. That involves instruction. Whether one does that full time or not, every elder does that kind of work, has that ability. In fact, that’s one of the qualifications of an elder. He is able to teach. He understands the word of God. He’s to know it well and be able to use it in his ministry. That is how shepherding is done. It’s done with the word of God. It is done according to the word of God.

In fact, Paul gives very clear instruction on that subject in Acts 20. You might look over to that chapter. I’m going to read a portion of it and then make some comments but this is where Paul visits for the last time with the Ephesian elders. He gives them exhortations very similar to what Peter exhorts these elders in another part of Asia Minor to do. It’s very similar to telling them to shepherd the flock of God.

We read beginning with verse 25. I’ll read down to verse 32. Paul says, “And now behold. I know that all of you among whom I went about preaching the kingdom will no longer see my face. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.” Pause right there and preach a sermon on limited atonement. I won’t do it, but he purchased the church of God with his blood. He made it his at the cross.

“He loves the church enough to pour out his blood for it. So we”, he’s telling these elders, “are to love it, too. Pour out your life blood for these people, this flock of God that he has given to you.”

Verse 29. “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own selves men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Well what did Paul do? What is the great emphasis that he makes there in that final exhortation, that final instruction that he gives to these men? Well, verse 25. He went about preaching the kingdom. What about teaching the word of God? Verse 27, he did not shrink from declaring the whole purpose of God to them.

Now people don’t like to hear the whole purpose of God. Paul doesn’t say that, but we know that. We know people. That’s certainly implied in what he says. Don’t shrink from doing that. People want to hear the part of the whole counsel of God that they like. They don’t want to hear the parts that they don’t like. So ministers are sometimes tempted to shy away, to shrink away from preaching the whole counsel of God because there are parts that are very hard for people to take.

Paul says don't do that. Don't shrink away from it. Preach all of it. Preach the word of God. Some of the last things that he tells to Timothy is, “Preach the word in season and out of season. When it's popular and when it's not. Always be preaching it.” The reason is given here in verse 32. “The word of his grace builds us up. It makes us mature. It makes us strong.”

That's the only way that Christians are going to be fit for the trials of life that come their way. They will always come. Some of them more difficult than others. Some people have to face a fiery ordeal. Throughout church history there have been those who have faced a literal fiery ordeal. Most of us don't face that, but we all face trials. The only way to be fit for them, the only way to be prepared for them is to be grounded in the word of God. That's what Paul is saying. The word of his grace builds us up. Makes us strong.

The church does not have men doing that. It will be like that crowd that moved Jesus to compassion like sheep without a shepherd. There'll be wandering sheep tossed about by every wind of doctrine. The prey of these false shepherds, these wolves that are about that Paul refers to.

So Peter here exhorts the elders. “Shepherd the flock of God among you exercising oversight.” Now that involves more than teaching, of course. That is the basis of what's done. The scriptures knowing, understanding, teaching the word of God, but oversight also involves personal involvement with the flock. It involves encouragement. It involves exhortation. It involves prayer. It involves correction. It involves discipline. When there is error or sin in the congregation the elders must deal with it.

That's not pleasant. It's not easy. I think some people enjoy it more than others, but some of us don't like confrontation. It's difficult, but still, it's necessary. It has to be done if there is to be order in the church, if there is to be purity in the church. If the elders don't do these things and don't function as shepherds, then the chief shepherd will exercise his discipline because judgment starts in the house of God. That's where it begins.

So Peter urges them to be responsible, but he quickly follows that with a warning listing three sins that elders might be prone to, they might fall into because well, they have a very significant position, a position of authority. Presumably they have the character that would fit them for that position. They're still subject to the problems of human nature. They may have a tendency to have the troubles and fall to the temptations that others do.

So Peter lists three sins and he gives the remedies as well. Calvin summarizes this section by writing, “In exhorting pastors to their duty he points out three sins, especially which are often to be found. Namely sloth, desire for gain and lust for power.”

First thing he writes is that the elder is not to do his work under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God. In other words, he’s not to do it out of a sense of obligation or do it because it has to be done. I suppose if no one’s doing the work, then one must do it even though one may be reluctant, but that’s not to be the attitude. If that is the attitude, he’s to dismiss that attitude. He’s to change his attitude. He’s to have an attitude realizing that this is valuable work. It is a high calling and it should be done with that attitude, a sense of gratitude that he can serve the Lord in that way.

And an elder is not to serve for sorted gain, but with eagerness. Human nature is prone to love money, to love the things of this world. It’s not wrong to have money and it’s not wrong for an elder to be paid for the service that he does. In 1 Timothy 5:17 and 18 Paul makes it very clear that some elders should be supported financially in the ministry. That’s what they devote their time to, but an elder should be free of greed.

One of the qualifications of an elder is that. 1 Timothy 3:3, “Free from the love of money.” Financial support is legitimate, but that should not be the driving motivation, the driving force in a man’s reason for ministering. Not for the money. Not for the financial gain that he might think he’s going to obtain. The motivation in serving is that of eagerness, which I take to be joy. Not just satisfaction and the opportunity to serve the Lord in this way, an eagerness to do it. That’s what’s to drive him.

In verse 3 Peter gives the third sin and antidote. “Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” People who are hungry for power are domineering in that position. They like to flaunt their power. There are people who love money. They’re very inquisitive. That’s what they set their hearts on and there are people who may love money or maybe they don’t, but they love power. They love to have control. They love to have the esteem, the admiration of people. When they have that they abuse the power. They lord it over people.

Wayne Grudem in his commentary writes about the word lording it over. “That the word always seems to involve bringing something into subjection by the use of force, whether physical, military or political.” Peter forbids using that kind of force, that kind of leadership. That’s not biblical leadership. It’s arbitrary. It’s selfish. It exercises threats or that kind of abuse. Nothing like that.

Intimidation is not to be used as a means of leading people. Peter forbids that, but we have examples of it I think in the scriptures. **Deotrophees** comes to mind. A man that John writes of in 3 John verse 9. He speaks of him evidently as a leader in a particular church, which John was writing to. A man who opposed the apostles. So John describes him as one who, “Loves to be first among them and doesn’t accept what we say.” He wants to be first even put himself over the apostles. That’s the kind of thing that Peter is describing here.

“Love of power is as poisonous as love of money.” Instead what Peter says elders are to be is examples of the flock. That’s how they are to lead. Well, they’re to lead in other ways as well. They’re to lead with the instruction of the word of God, but not to be like those Pharisees who could instruct, but did not conform to their own instruction. Our lives are to be lives that are exemplary that lead not by force, but by example. These are characteristics that people in the congregation should look for in those who would be considered for the position of elder. The congregation has a part to play in that. That’s how we know who to think about as an elder.

The Holy Spirit raises up men to be elders, but the congregation can affirm that or contradict the wrong opinion that others may have about someone. So a congregation should know these characteristics that they should expect to see in an elder and make judgments on that basis.

It is a responsibility, that of elder, that is to be accepted with disinterest. Meaning not a lack of interest, but without selfish motives because Peter doesn’t promise these shepherds, these elders’ advantages in this world. He doesn’t promise them rewards in this world. That is not what the elder is to be looking for. Peter doesn’t give any hope of that. What he promises is great reward though. It’s reward to come.

He speaks of that in verse 4. “And when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfailing crown of glory.” That word crown is used of a victor’s crown or wreath in athletic contests. It’s also the reward that a Roman general would give to some of his brave soldiers. Men who had distinguished themselves. That’s the nature of a crown. It’s given as a special honor. They’re not given to all. Only those who had distinguished themselves. Peter is making that point in regard to the elder.

Now there are crowns that we read about in the New Testament that are for everyone. We can see it in Paul, his writings. It seems that in 2 Timothy 8 he speaks of

that, the crown of righteousness. That is laid up for all who love the Lord’s appearing. It seems to be for everyone. Christian loves the Lord’s appearing.

Then also in James 1:12 he speaks of the crown of life and it is for those who love Christ. That would be characteristic of the Christians. So there are crowns that are for everyone, but this seems to be a reward for the elder. For that individual. Not for all believers. Though we might say that those who are faithful in the ministry they carry out are going to receive a special reward, a special crown, but this is something that’s promised to the elder and not all elders, but those who are diligent, those who are faithful in their ministry, those who carry it out faithfully. Serve God’s people. That should be a motivation to serve faithfully.

We may not have some things in this world. Serving the Lord may call for sacrifice, but we don’t sacrifice anything in this life that God doesn’t more than make up for for all eternity with crowns the way he describes them that cannot fade away. Unfading crown. Not like those laurels that the Greek athletes would give. They’re made out of parsley and would be withered and dried by the end of the day. These don’t fade away. The honor doesn’t fade away. The glory of it never fades away. That’s something to live for.

Now in verse 5 Peter turns his attention from the shepherds to the sheep, from elders to young men and all the congregation. The audience changes, but the subject is basically the same. It is about instruction relating to those who hold the office of elder. “You younger men”, he writes, “likewise be subject to your elders.” Young men are to be willing to support elders unless, of course, the elder is wrong. The elder’s making a mistake. The elder is teaching something that’s not correct. Not to follow him in that, but generally the young men he’s saying are to give support.

Now some have argued that this is not speaking about elders. That what Peter is referring to here are old people, elderly people. Not men occupying the office of elder. That is a possible explanation because the word that’s used here means that. It is the same word that’s used of the elder in a church. That word’s also used in other places in the New Testament of elderly people. Not people who are holding a particular office, but older people.

So it may be that Peter is simply speaking to young people and telling them in the church you be respectful to older people. As I say, it’s the same word. So we can’t know just by reading the statement. We can only determine the meaning of the statement by the

context. Since it’s just been used of elders in a church, those who hold the office, that seems to be the proper way to take it here. That’s the way I take it at least is that Peter is referring still to the elders of the church. Now not as to what they do, but what the people in the congregation do in response to them. How they respond to them.

Well, why does he single out young people here. Why didn’t he say that to everyone. Well, it would apply to everyone, but young people, I assume this would be the reason, need to be reminded of that more than older people. Young people tend to be more independent and do things the way they want to do them. So he’s reminding them you be respectful; you be submissive to authority. People who are young like to buck authority and he’s saying don’t do that.

Some people feel that this actually begins a new section. It may as a matter of fact, but some think that he’s taken on a new subject here. So really this begins the next section. It certainly leads into it, but if that is so, it really fits well with what preceded because what Peter is doing falls in line with the proper function of a church, the proper response to an elder, the way a church should function, which is with humility. To be in submission, then to be faithful in the service of Christ, whether it be an elder or whether it be people in the congregation. That takes humility.

So whether Peter is starting a new section or not and that’s not reflected in the numbering of the verses, still it fits with the subject. Peter is urging humility. That would apply to the elder and that applies to the congregation. That’s how we function properly as a church.

Well he turns from the young people toward the end of verse 5 to the congregation as a whole and writes, “All of you clothe yourself with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Peter speaks of humility here in terms of putting on a garment. It’s very expressive. This is a rare word. I think it’s used only here in the New Testament, but it is used elsewhere of a slave putting on an apron, girding himself or herself for work, for service. So the image here is that of being humble toward others.

We think of our Lord in John 13, the night of the last supper when he begins that evening by girding himself for service, stripping down and girding himself up like a slave, then kneeling down and washing the feet of the disciples. He humbled himself for them. The point is that’s what we’re to do. We’re to have this attitude toward all. We’re to put them first, which is what Paul has taught. Philippians 2:3-4, “Do nothing from selfishness

or empty conceit, but with humility of mind. Regard each one as more important than yourself. Regard one another in that way.” No one is exempt. Everyone is to respond in this way.

The reason is given at the end of the verse with a quote from Proverbs 3:34, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Why would he be opposed to the proud? Well because the proud trust in themselves. They don’t trust in the Lord. The proud seek glory for themselves. They don’t seek to glorify God. The proud elevate themselves above others and they trample others beneath them. God is opposed to that, but he gives grace, he gives his undeserved favor to those who have humility of mind.

The verb gives is in the present tense. This is the constant response of God to the humble. He constantly gives them grace. We are humble because God has given us grace. We become that way because of God’s grace and as we live out humble lives, God gives more grace. That’s the constant response that God has. He’s always against the proud and he always blesses the humble. So we’re to seek to live that way.

It’s contrary to our nature. It takes grace to become humble, but by God’s grace we will be humble and we will be servants to one another and we will carry out the responsibility that God has given us. That at least should be our prayer. That we be humble and that we be servants and that we do it with joy, with gratitude as unto the Lord.

Well, let’s conclude our lesson with that and with a prayer for that. Let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace. We are recipients of that in every aspect of our life. In the material things and the spiritual things. We are the sheep of your pasture because you have made us that way. We are the sheep of your pasture because you have created us as your people. That’s what the _____ says. That’s your grace and your grace continues on and we give you praise for that.

You never cease to extend grace to us. So keep us humble, Father, and give us that disposition and that selfless attitude and make us very effective, whether we be elders or deacons or the believer priests in the congregation, may we carry out our responsibilities in a way that’s faithful to you. May that be true of this church. We pray and we pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.