

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expository Journey Through **1Peter**

1Peter 5:1-4

48 The Weight and Reward of Shepherd/Elders, Part 1

April 14, 2019

1 Peter 5:1-4

1 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,

2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

To the Glory of God

Christianity is the most unique Religion in the world. Nothing else is like it. No other religion or human philosophy even comes close. Now that statement is *primarily* true because, by definition, all of the other religions of the world are a lie. They are all false. None of them are true. There is not a single sin that can be forgiven and not a single soul that can be saved by believing and understanding and trusting in what any of the other religions of the world teach. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 10:20b&21:**

... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

So, the Bible teaches here that only genuinely saved people can *correctly* worship God. And that means that all of the religious activity that is engaged by all of those who are deceived by false religion is NOT true Worship. God the Holy Spirit “moved along” the Apostle Paul to say that when those, who believe and trust in false religions, go through all of the various rituals and ceremonies and prayers and fastings and sacrifices that their religion demands from them, they are, in fact, worshipping demons.

Now it is common today to hear lukewarm and unsaved people say something like, “*I believe that all religions are good and there are noble people in all religions*”, or “*All religions are basically the same, and they disagree only on peripheral issues that don't really matter*”. And many of these people don't actually believe this because they have never actually studied the differences between the world's religions, but they say this because it makes them look good.

But Christianity alone and singularly makes the astounding and offensive Statement that Belief and Trust in Jesus *alone* is *required* for Salvation. And this *exclusionary* position began with Jesus Himself, Who said:

John 14:6

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

And I want to be crystal clear about what this Statement means. Jesus was saying here that no human can be forgiven and enter into Heaven without going through Him. And the way the Greek is written here shows us that this is what is called an “exclusionary declaration” by Jesus. In other words, Jesus is *not* saying that He is “a” choice among several other religious leaders. He isn't even saying that He is the “best” choice” among several other choices. No, Jesus is saying that He is the “only” choice for *anyone* who wants to go to Heaven.

In other words, no human being who hears and understands and believes and puts his trust in and then obeys all of the Teachings of any of the world's religions can hope to have any of his sins forgiven and enter into heaven with God. Let me say this another way: There is no Salvation in believing and obeying any of the other religions of the world. Let me say this in yet another way: All of the people who

sincerely believe and who *sincerely* obey the Teachings of any of the world's religions will spend all of eternity in hell. In other words, those who do not come to Jesus, and Jesus alone, for Salvation are doomed.

Now you may think I am being too exclusionary here, but I didn't say this, Jesus did. And what I just said is the correct meaning of what Jesus and Paul and every other writer of the New Testament said. And this absolute, *exclusionary*, Position has been *clearly* and *repeatedly* and *unashamedly* taught by the Christian Church for 2,000 consecutive years.

Now you certainly don't have to believe me. But it is the fact that there is no Salvation in anyone or anything else besides Jesus that is the *primary* Catalyst as to *why* the Christian Church sends Missionaries around the world, to civilizations that are *already* up and running, that *already* have their own religion and culture, that *already* have laws in place based on that religion and culture, and *why* those Missionaries risk their own lives to call the people of those nations to repent of sin and to completely *abandon* their false and man-made religions and convert to Christianity. So, if there is no difference between the religions of the world, why are there so many Missionaries out there right now trying as hard as they can to convert other people? If all the religions of the world are fundamentally the same, then all of those Missionaries should immediately come back home!

No, the proof that the Christian Church believes what I just said is the unbelievable *spread* of Christianity around the world, and the gigantic, unavoidable *influence* that the Church of Jesus has had, even on unbelievers, for 2,000 consecutive years.

But the Reality is that no other religion or human philosophy teaches what Christianity teaches. So, out of the almost 8,000 different religions and sects and philosophies that are in place right now throughout the entire world, we can actually boil them all down into two groups:

Group 1: (Comprising everything besides Christianity) teaches that lost people are saved, made right with God, become righteous, obtain forgiveness, achieve Favor with God, by what they do for *themselves* (based on what the religions teach).

Group 2: Biblical Christianity, which teaches that lost people are saved and become Righteous *by Grace alone through Faith alone*, by *believing* and *trusting* in Jesus and in His finished Work

So, *unlike* around 7,999 other religions, Christianity teaches that lost people can't "do" anything to earn or deserve Salvation. Christianity alone teaches that Salvation is "by" the Grace of God (alone) and "through" the Gift of "Saving Faith" (alone) "in" the Person of Jesus Christ and "in" His finished Work (alone). Here is how the Apostle Paul taught this dynamic in **Romans 10:9:**

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

In other words, Christianity teaches that the sons and daughters of Adam are forgiven and made right with God by what we *believe in*, what we *trust in*, and what we *confess*, and *not* by anything that we "do". And the logic of Paul's teaching was demonstrated in the very next verse:

Romans 10:10

for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Now I have taught you that the word, "**for**" means: "*because*". So, the reason that a person is saved by Grace through Faith- is because:

- **with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness**
- **with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation**

And so, the Apostle teaches here that "Righteousness", which is a human being coming into "right standing" with God, is obtained by "belief", and NOT by actions or deeds. And the Apostle teaches that Salvation is the *result* or the *conclusion* to what we "confess" openly and out loud with our mouths, as a result of already believing.

Now as this very same Apostle was teaching the people of the city of Ephesus, he *summarized* what he taught in **Romans** to say this:

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Now look closely at what the Apostle is saying here. He says that Salvation is "by" the Grace of God. So, the *catalyst*, the *origination*, the *initiation* of Salvation, is not *anything* that human beings do, it is the "unmerited Favor" of God, the "unearned Special Treatment", or the "undeserved Action" of God toward guilty rebels.

And then he said that Salvation was also "through" Faith. So, God initiates Salvation by His Grace alone, and Salvation is made real or actual to each person through Faith. But look at how Paul went on to describe the Faith that Salvation is "through":

... and that not of yourselves...

So, what is "not of ourselves"? Salvation? No, Faith. Here the Apostle teaches that the Faith that Salvation is "through" is not "of yourselves". In other words, the kind of Faith that saves souls is not *inherent* in the human vessel. So, from where does the kind of Faith that saves- come? Paul answers:

... it is the gift of God;

So, *part* of what it means to be "fallen" is that we do not already have this kind of Faith. And so, God has to *gift it* to us. And theologians have called *this* kind of Faith "Saving Faith" to distinguish *this* Faith from other, more *human* kinds of faith.¹

And the sum of the matter is that Salvation is wholly and solely a Work of God alone, and has nothing to do with anything that we do or that we can earn by our actions. And Paul agrees with this when he said:

**Ephesians 2:9a
not as a result of works...**

So, Christianity is the only religion in the history of the world that teaches that Salvation is NOT the result of any act or deed or labor or

¹ Like the kind of faith where a person trusts that when he puts his foot down on the brake- his car will stop.

work that humans can do. So, Salvation is *not* the “product” or the “result” of our labor. Salvation is *not* the “payment” for our work. And Salvation is *not* the “reward” for our efforts. Not even *religious* works.

But *why* in the world did God set up Salvation like this? Paul tells us at the end of this very verse:

... so that no one may boast.

Now God *could* have set up Salvation any way He wanted to. And so, He could have set up Salvation to be the result of human effort. But, He didn't. And He didn't on purpose. So, the question is, “*Why?*” *Why* is human boasting so *despised* by God? 37 times in the Bible God condemned the boasting of men, especially about Salvation. So, *why* did God go to such great lengths to totally *eliminate* the capacity for any human being to boast about his own Salvation? But the fact that God *did indeed* go to such great lengths to eliminate human boasting shows us that, evidently, this is a real big deal with God.

We must understand that God's Glory is *the* single most important commodity in all the Universe to God. *Nothing* means more to God than that He is glorified. *Everything* that God does, He does for no other reason other than that He alone is glorified. And that is true from Creation all the way to Salvation. And God, doing all that He does, for no other reason than that He alone is glorified is expressed in the Bible in three main ways:

1. When God says, “*For My Glory!*”
2. When God says, “*For My Name's Sake!*”
3. When God says, “*So they will know that there is none like Me in all the earth!*”

You see, when human beings do something, *anything*, and then receive a reward for their effort or their labor, they have *earned* that reward. And the payment they receive is *not* Mercy they are *entitled* to receive that reward; they *deserve* it. They did what they were *supposed* to do, they *carried out* the requirements, they *fulfilled* their obligation, and they have now been *rewarded* with the fruit of their labor. And that reward is a “Payment” that is the just result of their efforts.

And part of earning the reward is the dignity and respect that they are entitled to possess, by virtue of doing what they were supposed to do and receiving the just reward for their labor. So, in that case, they have *earned* the right to boast, they are *entitled* to receive glory, they *deserve* the credit and the honor and the praise, for what they did, to earn the reward. In fact, it would be wrong for them NOT to receive the credit, or for someone or something else to steal or rob from them, their ability to boast.

But that means that “human boasting” over Salvation *competes* with God for Glory. Human boasting is at war with God over who deserves Credit and Honor and Praise for saving the soul of unworthy rebels. And one will always win out. So, with every aspect of human existence (including Salvation), either God will receive the Glory or Man will, but both *cannot*. So, if Salvation was the Result or the Reward that God gave to those who have earned it, by virtue of them fulfilling their religious duties, then two things would be true:

1. Salvation *could not* be “by” Grace and “through” Faith.
2. God would be a thief for wanting all the Glory, and by not allowing humans to boast.

Human beings are *entitled* to receive the Glory, they have *earned* the right to boast, if it is true that they have done what God requires them to do to be saved. And, in that scenario, God would then be *obligated* to save them. And God would be sinning by robbing Man of the glory that he was entitled to receive by what they did for themselves.

So, if Salvation was earned by works, then humans deserve glory if they do what they are supposed to do. And God would then be *required* to “pay” them what they are owed by saving them.

But the Bible is clear, Salvation is *not* a payment. It is *not* a wage. Salvation is not earned or deserved. The Bible says that Salvation is “by” the Grace of God, and it is “through” the Gift of saving Faith. And the Bible goes on to say that Salvation is *not* earned or deserved by *anything* that we do. And therefore, no human can say to God, “*I did what You told me to do! I accomplished what you required from me. I earned my Salvation because I put forth more effort than*

the others, and I am entitled to be saved, and I am entitled to boast about it!"

We must understand that God is not *obligated* to save *anybody*. God would be perfectly fine if nobody was saved. God would not be unjust in the least if He allowed every human on earth to enter into Hell, right this minute, precisely because we are all guilty sinners. God saves entirely as a natural and normal outflow of His Nature to have Mercy on whoever He chooses to have Mercy.

Wicked sinners, exulting in inexpressible Joy, as a result of being so radically transformed by what God alone does for them, *magnifies* the Glory of God's Grace better than anything else. *That* is why God saves us.

Now all that I have been doing over the last few minutes, is teaching Biblical Truth. Theology. Doctrine. And *that* is the single most important thing that any human being can do in this life, precisely because hearing and believing Biblical Truth is what will save the human soul.

Now the Subject we have been dealing almost exclusively over the past few moments happens to be what the Bible teaches about Salvation. So, I have given you the verses of Scripture, I then broke each one down, then I dissected every word, and put them into their proper context. Why? Because I am an important person? No. Because I want you to admire me? No. I did all this so that you can understand and believe what the Bible actually says, so that two things will be true:

1. God will be glorified.
2. Unworthy sinners will experience the fullness of Joy.

But the point I am making is this: If Christianity teaches that we are saved "by what we believe in", and "by what we trust in", and "by what we confess", and NOT "by what we do", then we must go on to say that what we believe in matters. And what we trust in better be right. And what we confess should reflect accurately what God revealed in saved Scripture.

Because if we are wrong about what we believe about Salvation, then we're not going to Heaven. If we are *deceived* or *led astray* about Salvation, we are doomed. So, this is real, serious business. But that

means that what is being taught, what is preached, what and how it is all explained, and articulated, and how all the various pieces are put together is what *facilitates* correct belief. So, without "right belief", there is no Salvation. But then we have to go further and say, "*Without right Teaching, there can be no belief either*".

So, it all begins with Teaching. Teaching the Scriptures, rightly and fully, leads to Salvation and to Sanctification and to "right living". And so, the most important aspect that goes on in the Church of Jesus is Teaching/Preaching/Articulating/Explaining/Expositing the Scriptures. And everything else flows out from that. All of our singing, all of our praying, all of our believing, all of our doing, everything else that the Church of Jesus says or believes or does, flows out from Teaching. And that makes Teaching very important. Here is what Peter said:

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...

So, please bear with me as I give you several examples where full and correct Teaching does *not* occur, to give you some context, as to how important right and full Teaching really is. Right this minute, there are several thousand people, who are on their hands and knees, crawling up the 28 steps² over in Rome, praying to the saints, praying to God, praying to Mary, asking the leaders of the Roman religious system to petition God that He would release "merit" from the Heavenly Treasury so that they themselves or a loved one can escape Purgatory and enter into Heaven.

Now why are thinking human beings doing this? Well, according to the "Catechism of the Catholic Church", God has created a "Treasury" in Heaven where all of the *excess* "righteousness" of the biblical figures is stored.³ This is "merit" that was *above and beyond*

² The "Scala Sancta"

³ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*; Sections/Paragraphs 1476-1477: "[T]he 'treasury of the Church' is the infinite value, which can never be exhausted, which Christ's merits have before God. They were offered so that the whole of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. In Christ, the Redeemer himself, the satisfactions and merits of his Redemption exist and find their efficacy. This treasury includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body.

the “merit” that they needed to *earn* Heaven while they were alive (according to Roman Theology). The Catechism, which is officially published by the Vatican, goes on to say that the pope, in his official capacity as the tangible, physical, and visible representation of Jesus Christ on the earth (vicar), has the authority (the keys) to make a “withdrawal” from the Treasury and give that “merit” to someone else.

Now you must understand that the Bible does not teach this. There is not even the slightest hint of anything remotely like this, anywhere in the Bible. This is entirely a *fabricated* and *man-made* doctrine of demons, created for no other reason than to deceive people. And yet, this is taught *openly* and *publicly* and *authoritatively* by those who hold themselves out to, not only be the representatives of the “true church”, but representatives of the “ONLY church”.

And thousands of very earnest and sincere people are relying on this, right this moment, as I speak. In other words, the only hope that these people have of attaining Salvation is that this will be done for them.

Now this ought to make every one of us furious! The audacity of this “apostate religious system that has isolated themselves from the Authority of Scripture”, deceiving millions and tens of millions of human beings with a man-made fantasy is not merely wrong, it is disgusting! It is Evil! It is an affront to the Bible itself! Only satan himself benefits from such deception. But why do people believe this? Because that is what they are being taught.

In addition to that, there are at least 150 million human beings, this morning, scattered all over the world, who honestly believe that if they die in a “legally declared jihad”⁴, they will *immediately* enter into Heaven. This is the Teaching that motivates college educated women to strap bombs to the vests of their ten-year old little girls. And the Governments of several Middle Eastern nations will pay \$25,000 to the families when their child blows up as many “infidels” as possible.

Now *why* do they do this? Because they have been deceived by false teaching. Still more millions of people sincerely believe that when they die, they will re-cycle back to this life as a mouse or a flea or a cow, and they will go through as many lives as necessary until they reach “Nirvana”.⁵

⁴ The Teachings from the Qu-ran

⁵ The Teachings of the Bhagavad- Gita

So, I ask you again, does it matter what you believe? Does it matter what you are being taught? Does it matter what you are trusting in? "Right believing" is *essential* if we are to be God's people.

But how do we assure that what we are being taught is true? Who, in the Church, has the Authority to correct *others* in the Church? Who possesses the God-given "Right" to determine "Truth from Error", to "bind the conscience of the believer", and to "make a difference between that which is Holy and that which is Profane?"

The Roman religious system teaches that the pope has that Authority. And that when the pope sits in the "Throne of St. Peter" and makes statements about Faith or Morals, that what the pope says is "infallible", that what he says does not possess the *ability* to be in error.⁶ So, even though there has been much debate about who has actually been the pope at any given time, and even though much of what popes have spoken is *at odds* with things that other popes have spoken, the "Doctrine of Papal Infallibility" is a *cornerstone* belief of the visible Roman religious system to this day.

But God was faithful to His Church. And all through the history of Christianity, God raised up various godly and faithful men who stood *against* this false teaching, even at their own peril. And 500 years ago, they hammered out a concept that became the "Formal Cause" of the Protestant Reformation. And the Issue at stake was:

"Who has the final Authority to 'bind the conscience' and to determine Divine Truth?"

... and after much consideration, the Roman system officially and formally replied: "*The pope*", while the Reformers replied: "*Scripture and Scripture alone*".

So, *part* of what it means to be a "Protestant" in 2019 is that you have not lost your "protest" against the unbiblical and man-made Teachings of Rome, and that you ascribe to the concept of "Sola Scriptura". So, "Protestants" believe that when the Bible says,

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16&17)

⁶ The Doctrine of Papal Infallibility

... that four things come “from the Scriptures, and from the Scriptures ALONE”:

1. All Teaching
2. All Reproof
3. All Correction
4. All Training in Righteousness

... and that neither the pope, nor the bishops, nor the individual ministers, nor any group, nor any denomination, may engage in any of these four things *apart from Scripture*. So, it is *not* the edicts of kings, *nor* the pronouncements of popes; it is *not* the dreams of sincere people, *nor* their visions or dreams or revelations; it is *not* the words of angels or prophets, but it is Scripture, and Scripture *alone*, that determines what we are to believe and what we are to teach.

Now you would think that this would solve the Problem. All we have to do is to read and understand the Bible, and then teach and believe what it says. Simple, right? Not so fast. Because as of this date, those who *say* they are Protestants and who *say* they adhere to the concept of “Sola Scriptura” comprise about 12,000 different factions!

Giving the individual believer the right to have the Bible in his own language ignited the largest and longest-lasting Revival in the history of the world. And we praise God for that. More people read the Bible today than any other book, even with all the compromise that we see today. But that amazing, hard-won Freedom gave rise to every Tom, Dick, and Harry placing their *own* personal and private interpretation on the Scriptures that they now had in their hands, which resulted in the division and confusion we see today, even though this is in direct *violation* of what the Scriptures themselves teach:

2 Peter 1:20

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation,

The concept of “The Priesthood of the Believer” that was hammered out by the Reformers in the fires of the Reformation affirms the Biblical Truth that, in the New Covenant, there does not exist any

“hierarchical Priesthood”, but that *every* genuine believer is a priest unto God. *Every* believer has God the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of him. And so, *every* believer can read the Bible and understand it and apply its correct meaning to his own life. And many people rightly affirm this concept today.

But this concept then goes on to say that Truth is not up for grabs. And the meaning of every verse of the Bible is *not* determined by each individual believer, but by correctly analyzing the Scriptures to arrive at the one single correct meaning. So, “Scripture must interpret Scripture”. So, the notion that a believer has the authority to make the Bible mean whatever he wants it to is *fighting against* the clear intent of the God Who gave us the Bible. And *this* part of the concept of “The Priesthood of the Believer” is almost never even discussed today.

The “Right” to have a Bible and to read it for ourselves comes with the “Responsibility” to discern the meaning of each verse CORRECTLY. And so, to have a Bible, and yet to NOT rightly interpret it, is actually *worse* than not having a Bible at all.

So, what do we do? How can we all begin to unite around the Divine Truth of Scripture and *heal* the divisions and *unite* believers around a *single* Doctrine? How can we *re-claim* the “common Salvation”⁷ that Jude talked about? Thanks be to God, because He has given us the Gifts and the Tools to do just that! In His Mercy, God has not left us to chance. He has not left us to our own devices, either. It is not, “*Whatever happens*”. When Jesus comes back, this is what He will do, He will:

... present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:27b)

Jesus is going to present to Himself the “Crowning Achievement of His Grace”, a Church, a body of fallen people, from every tongue and tribe and kindred and nation, who have all been saved by Grace and through Faith, that does not have a single spot, a Church that does not have one wrinkle, and a Church that does not have anything even *resembling* a spot or a wrinkle! Praise be to His Name!

And so, we live in a time where God has given us the high honor and distinct privilege to be used by the King to *know* the Truth, to

⁷ Jude 3

believe the Truth, to *teach* the Truth, to *proclaim* the Truth, to strive to *obey* the Truth, and to *see to it* that the Truth of Scripture is heard *rightly and fully*, and believed on *completely*, and trusted in *absolutely*, so that Christ may get Himself the Glory that He has earned!

But how do we do that? What Tools did God give to His Church to fix this problem? What Gifts did God give so that we may see true, godly, and biblical Unity among genuine believers? I'm so glad you asked. Please look at the "Gifts" from **Ephesians 4:11**:

And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

Now here is what is commonly called "The Five-fold Ministry" of the Church. But actually, it is a "*Four*-fold Ministry" because the Gift of "Pastor/Teacher" is the *same* Gift. But these four Ministries are "Ministry Gifts" that God gave to His Church. Now why did God give the Church these Ministry Gifts?

Ephesians 4:12-16

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Now there is a lot here, but suffice it to say that the reason that Apostles are listed *before* Prophets has to do with the fact that receiving and articulating the New Covenant was an infinitely *superior* Ministry from those that God used to bring in the Old or the First Covenant. And the main purpose that these Ministries exist is to equip genuine believers in what they are to *believe*, so *they won't be deceived!* And that means that the primary Ministry of the Church is *not* to feed the hungry or clothe the naked or house the homeless or advocate for a

more just society. All of those are noble and wonderful activities, but they are all *secondary* to the *main* Goal which is to develop and articulate and teach and hold all believers accountable to Biblical Truth. Why? So, that God may be glorified, so that sinners may be saved, to God's Glory, and so that saved people may live godly lives to God's Glory.

But we no longer have any living Apostles or Prophets. And so, we cannot go to them and ask them to act in the capacity of an Apostle or Prophet. But what we *do* have are the inspired *writings* of the Apostles and Prophets (and others) in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And so, the modern Ministry of the Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists- is to propagate Christianity around the world (making all of God's enemies a footstool under His Feet) by correctly and fully teaching from the sacred writings of the Apostles and Prophets. Now look at the "Tools" God gave His Church from **Titus 1:5**:

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

Here, the Apostle Paul was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to teach that the way that "what remains" will be "set in order" is by and through a group called "the Elders". This is what Peter meant when he said that one of the main tasks of Elders in the Church is to:

... exercising oversight

So, people are *not* to be "lone rangers" and serve God according to the dictates of their own hearts. That isn't being obedient to God, it is being a rebel. God has already told us how to conduct His Business in the earth. Since the glorious New Covenant has come upon the scene through the Life, and Ministry and Death and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, God no longer operates today through lone individuals. God operates today through His Church, which is His Body. And the Church that Jesus set up has Elders in it. And those Elders have qualifications they have to meet up with, and those Elders have God-given authority. So, anyone operating today *outside* of the "oversight" of qualified and called Elders is simply doing his own thing and is out of line with God and His Word.

So, in the Bible, when there was a *doctrinal* dispute, when false teaching reared its ugly head, the Church gathered together to resolve the matter. And it was the Apostles and the Elders who was tasked with the awesome responsibility to settle a dispute about what the Christian Church should believe and teach. Please look at **The Acts 15:1**.

Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Now let us agree that this is a *theological* issue. This is *not* a *political* or *social* issue. This is an issue of what the Christian Church is supposed to *believe* and *teach* about Salvation. Some men from Judea began teaching that in order for Gentile converts to be "good Christians", they had to first become "good Jews". So, the Question before the young Church was: "Is Salvation brought about by keeping the Old Mosaic Law, or is Salvation "by" Grace and "through" Faith, ALONE, absent any and all human works, even those works *commanded* in the Old Testament?" So, look what the Church did:

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. (The Acts 15:2)

So, at first, Paul and Barnabas tried to settle the problem, one on one. And the phrase, "[they] **had great dissention and debate with them**" shows us that their confrontation with the false teachers was not quiet, nor calm. And this gives us indication how we are to view false teachers. False teachers are trying to send people to hell. They are trying to deceive people and bring confusion to their minds about serious and eternal issues. So, whereas, we are to treat all men with respect, and be kind and merciful to even our worst enemies, false teachers are in a category all by themselves.

But also notice that even a confrontation with a man like Paul was not enough. No, serious doctrinal and biblical issues- must be dealt with in a serious and biblical way. And so, Dr. Luke tells us that the "brethren", which I assume were all the leaders, all unanimously agreed

that this Issue must be dealt with by a "Church Council". And who makes up the Church Council? According to this Passage, a Church Council is made up of two groups:

1. The Apostles
2. The Elders

.. and as you read the inspired account of what became known as "The Jerusalem Council", you see that, even though they didn't call it this, those who settled the Issue- used the concept of "Sola Scriptura". And in this section of the Bible, you see that they conducted the Council in a *systematic* way:

- They thoroughly examined the Issue.
- They examined and applied Scripture.
- They came to a Conclusion that was both "formal" and "official", and which then became part of what the Church believed and taught from that time forward.

But our problem today is that there are no living Apostles with whom we might "gather" to settle a serious issue of what the Church must believe and teach about a serious and eternal Matter. But we have the *writings* of the Apostles. And so, *part* of the weighty and serious and frightening and dead earnest responsibility of Elders is to follow along with the Pattern established in the Bible, and gather together, with the writings of the Apostles, and with prayer and humility, hammer out a formal and official Conclusion to the matter at hand, utilizing the concept of "Sola Scriptura". And so, that Conclusion then becomes *part* of what the Church will believe and teach in the future, because it CANNOT be at odds with anything that the Scriptures declare. This is *why* we have a "Doctrinal Statement" in this Church, and why the Doctrinal Statement is very detailed. The Doctrinal Statement of this Church represents the best effort by qualified and godly Elders, at arriving at what the Scriptures teach about very serious and eternal Matters, utilizing the concept of Sola Scriptura, and that is in line with historic, orthodox Christianity.

Now some Issues are relatively easy and simple to decide. But, all through Church history, there have been Issues that were simply *not*

clear, and that were very hard and difficult to determine. For example, during the "Arian Controversy" of the fourth Century, there was a serious dispute about the full Deity of Jesus. And the argument eventually boiled down to a single letter of a single word. And the Church of Jesus struggled for 42 years over one letter of one word, utilizing the concept of Sola Scriptura to come up with a written Conclusion to a very serious Biblical Issue that helped to develop part of "Biblical Orthodoxy". So, today, saved people can say with confidence:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ
The only begotten Son of God
Begotten of the Father before all worlds
God of God; Light of Light
Very God of very God
Begotten not made
Being of one substance (homousia) with the Father⁸

So, since the Christian Church has met together, and, utilizing the concept of Sola Scriptura, has already *officially and formally* decided the matter of Jesus' full Deity, there is not a single human being anywhere on earth today who can correctly lay claim to Salvation, who does not agree that Jesus is "of the same substance/essence/nature" as that of God the Father. In other words, because the Elders gathered together, and because they used the writings of the Apostles, and because they hammered out a written conclusion to the matter (utilizing Sola Scriptura) that has now become part of Orthodox Christianity, anyone today, who *disagrees* with or who outright *rejects* this portion of Essential Truth is in serious, *essential*, Error, and *cannot* accurately lay claim to be saved or be a Christian. That is how serious the Ministry of an Elder is.

Now, sadly, all through History, Elders have gathered together, and they have thoroughly examined a serious, eternal matter, but they did *not* utilize the concept of Sola Scriptura. And they did *not* keep within the written teachings of the Apostles, but they, in fact, simply *created* new doctrines, utilizing "human wisdom" and "human reasoning", based on *previous* edicts and writings of *previous* church leaders. This is in *violation* of the clear Pattern established in **The Book**

⁸ The Nicene Creed

of the Acts, and, therefore, their conclusions are NOT binding, and they are to be *rejected* and *discarded*, and that conclusion is NOT to be taught and believed by the Church.

So, it isn't simply that there are Elders. And it isn't simply that Elders meet together. And it also isn't simply that they thoroughly examine an issue. And it, also, isn't that they simply come to a conclusion that they SAY is official and formal and, thus, binding.

It is that there are *godly* Elders, *qualified* Elders, who are "made able" by being qualified, both *morally* and *theologically*, according to the Scriptures. And it is that these godly Elders meet in humility and in earnestness and in fear to "get the Gospel right". It is that when those Elders meet, they *utilize* the concept of Sola Scriptura, and that they carefully and fearfully *adhere* to the writings of the Apostles, and that they don't make stuff up.

An Elder doesn't have any more authority to invent Truth than does a janitor. An Elder that creates new doctrines that cannot be proven (clearly) in and by Scripture, and Scripture ALONE, has no more power to "bind the conscience" and "hold people accountable" to what he invented than does a snake oil salesman. The Authority of an Elder does NOT reside in the man or even in his Office. His Authority resides in his accuracy and allegiance to Scripture.

So, here in the first four verses of Chapter 5, God the Holy Spirit moved along Peter to teach us concerning the *seriousness*, the *weightiness* of an Elder. It is an Office and Ministry that brings great Joy and great Comfort and great Safety to the Church, because it correctly interprets the Bible so that God's people can hear and understand and believe Divine Truth. Elders also guard the sheep from wolves and false teachers. These men are tasked with the Calling to put their arms around God's people and "shepherd" them. They act as the watchmen on the walls to spot danger BEFORE it comes to the gates.

But being an Elder is also a place of great trepidation and trembling. Truly an Elder will weep and agonize before God much more than he laughs and rejoices. In fact, the weightiness of the Calling is so heavy that without God supernaturally empowering him, the Ministry would consume him.

There is no greater Joy than to see souls begin to understand the Word of God, and then see them rejoice as they apply what they have

learned to their own individual lives, and see for themselves that the Word of God is true. Watching a fallen sinner strive for Holiness in his daily life is truly a thing of beauty.

On the one hand, realizing that what he has taught others will result in them *rejoicing* with endless Delight, throughout all Eternity, brings Joy to an Elder's heart. And *that* is why there are Elders in the Church. *That* is why God gifted His Church with the Office of Elders. And this is what Peter was talking about in the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us.

Understanding correctly what the Bible says about Salvation results in lost people being saved. While not understanding or being deceived about what the Bible teaches about Salvation results in lost people remaining lost. In other words, people will either go to hell or heaven based on what they understand about what the Bible teaches about Salvation. That is how *serious* and *weighty* the Ministry of Elders is.

The burden of the biblical Elder is that the eternity of souls hangs on what he teaches them. What causes great fear to an Elder is the knowledge that if he teaches people *wrongly*, if he leads them astray, they will go to hell, and he will stand before God with their blood dripping off his hands. Look what the Prophet Ezekiel wrote about this from **Ezekiel 3:17-21**:

Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself.

And the Office, the Ministry, the Calling of the New Testament Church that is tasked with the responsibility to see to it, that God's people are hearing and understanding and believing and obeying Biblical Truth, is the Elders. They are the "Watchmen on the Walls", guarding the sheep and warning them about false teaching.

But the method by which the Elders do carry out their Ministry is primarily the through Teaching. Since we are saved by what we believe in, then what we believe in matters. And since what we believe in matters, what we are being taught matters. And since what is taught matters, who is teaching us matters. And God the Holy Spirit "moved along" the Apostle Paul to write down **1 Timothy 3** to give us the requirements for Elders.

But in that Chapter, the Apostle gave us the Requirements for both Deacons *and* Elders. So, qualifications for both the "Servants of the Church" and the "Watchmen of the Church" are found in this Chapter. But, as we carefully read the Chapter, we see that there is really only one distinction between the two sets of Qualifications. The Apostle Paul said that Elders must be:

1 Timothy 3:2b
... able to teach

Now a Deacon may certainly teach. Deacons are not prohibited *anywhere* from teaching. The difference is that an Elder **MUST** teach. But Paul goes even *further* here and says that an Elder must be *ABLE* to teach. And that means that a real, biblical Elder doesn't simply *desire* to teach; he isn't someone who has the "preacher's itch". No, an Elder is *prepared* to teach, he is *qualified* to teach, and he is *equipped* to teach.

So, as we enter into what the Apostle Peter taught here in the first four verses of **1 Peter 5**, we are reminded of the great and important Ministry of Elders. So, we need to pause in our "journey" through **1 Peter** and pitch our tent and "camp out" here on these four verses for a while, so we can get the full impact of what Peter was teaching those "scattered aliens" and us.

And the Summary that I want to leave with you today is this:

Since what we believe is so vastly important, two things are true:

1. *What* we are being taught is critical.
2. *Who* is teaching us is critical.

... so, those who teach us *must* be qualified. And by that, I am *not* referring *only* to formal religious education. It is fine if a person is formally educated. I am in awe of those who have had the privilege of being formally trained, as long as they haven't lost their walk with God in the process.

But the bottom line is that an Elder must know what they're talking about, and Elders must genuinely love the people they are teaching. Without *both* of those things being true, satan has an opening to deceive and bring havoc to the Church.

So, please go with me as we investigate all that Peter was moved along to teach about the Weight and the Reward of Biblical Elders.

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.