

Introduction

- Practical conclusions at the end of his letter
 - all in light of the "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." (1:3-4)
 - in light of, in context of, in the awareness of all that Jesus has done to adopt them, forgive them, save them (1:9), **this is how they should live**
 - and Peter is also painfully aware of their **suffering and trials** (4:12ff and v.10)
- Appeals to three distinct groups - though the NIV makes it look like just two!

To Elders (v.1-4)

- First appeal is to elders - leaders in the church
v.1: "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:"
- All of this is in light of the refining judgement we explored last week
 - there is a "therefore" hidden in the Greek behind the translation!
- Appeal is on basis of three things:
 - 1. **fellow elder**, elder means church leader; **emphasis on not being superior**; demonstrating humility; **note also leadership always corporate...**
 - 2. **witness to Christ's sufferings**, note **NOT** resurrection or Pentecost! Drawing attention to Peter's denial - and to his consequent deliverance from, forgiveness for, serious sin
 - 3. **partaker in his glory**, pointing to the full extent of Peter's restoration from failure - and the future reference of any reward, heavenly, not earthly...
- So?:
 - humility and a context of refining suffering is how Peter couches his appeal - what an example!

v.2, 3: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; (3) not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

- This is what Peter appeals for:
 - to shepherd the sheep of God (play on words in Greek) - very much tied to Jesus' language in John 21:16, Peter's restoration
 - to care for, lead to spiritual food, protect from danger...
- And Peter identifies three particular dangers for shepherds of God's flock:
 - 1. laziness or sloth - here expressed as grudging service, **"because you must"**
 - 2. greed - using the position to gain financially; may not seem much of a danger, but there is a financial security about say a minister's position, there is a trust in Christian circles generally that can be abused - I know of several Scottish examples of problems caused by greed amongst Christians
 - 3. power-lust; ie desire to have power or influence over other people - can be the power of being able to tell people what to do, the Messiah complex of a cult leader; closer to home can be the subtle desire to have influence, to be a part of the controlling group, to shape how things are done - lure of power is strong
- In each case the antidote is **service**, humble, self-giving service
 - so that we Christian leaders are **examples** to others - **who we are** in Christian leadership is more important than **what we do**

v.4: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away"

- If the task of leadership is daunting, then so too is the reward!
 - **crown of glory** uses language reminiscent of the prize a race winner would receive, or a medal troops would receive after a victorious campaign
 - pointer is forward, beyond this life - no guarantee of reward this side of heaven in

leadership

To Young Men (v.5a)

- Second, very brief appeal to young men
 - particular appeal to submit to those who are elders
 - (as in the previous verses, elder refers to those in church leadership)
 - something particularly hard for young men?!
 - perhaps particularly in our culture that so values youth...
 - note theme of humility running through these final verses

To Everyone (v.5b-11)

- Third appeal, to everyone - paragraph breaks in NIV are very confusing!
 - huge emphasis here is on attitude of humility - not thinking more of ourselves than we ought
 - twice in v.5b, then in v.6 (first before others, and then also before God); and then in v.7 the attitude of trust and leaving anxieties with God is a humble one - not trying to sort our problems ourselves...
 - the attitude throughout is to be of trustful acceptance of God's ways
- Then there is a bit of a change of topic at v.8:
 - from humility, to how to live as a Christian in spiritual conflict
 - here are these Christians living in a time of trial...
 - the first part of Peter's final appeal is to an attitude of humility
 - the second part of his final appeal is to spiritual watchfulness
- Picture is of prowling lion:
 - always need to be alert when around dangerous wild animals...
 - picture moves on from being watchful to taking action
 - v.9 talks about resisting - resisting temptation, resisting pressure to behave as others to, resisting pressure to be greedy or to gossip or to whatever...
- Picture ends, not with being eaten alive! but with two things:
 - first, future glory (v.10a) - compare with conclusion for leaders!
 - second, present strength (v.10b) - strong, firm, steadfast

Conclusion (v.12-14)

- All of this is truth:
 - (i) so grow in humility
 - (ii) so stand fast in it - hang in there!
 - (ii) so love one another as you live this truth
- Because of Jesus and the salvation he has brought us, the peace that comes through knowing him