

Roy's Sermon for January 16, 2022

1 Peter 4:19-5:6 'Humble Authority!'

Last week we came to the end of 1 Peter chapter 4, in verses 17-19 in a sermon I called "Judgement, and Contending For The Faith". V17 "the time to begin the judgement from the House of God has come, and if firstly from us, what will be the end of the ones disobeying the gospel of God?" And I explained that this is not the end of the world judgement at the return of Christ, but that perpetual disciplining love of God upon His remnant, as He "disciplines those whom He loves" and perpetually sorts out "the wheat from the tares." Historically speaking, as God brings judgement upon humanity for collective sin, He always begins with His own house. His people. His church!

2 Chronicles 30:6-9, Isaiah 10:10-12 and Jeremiah 25:29: in the midst of that judgement, mercy is found. As in Genesis 18:23-25, when Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah, when he pleaded for his nephew Lot! Yes, that is the pattern. He "disciplines those whom He loves" and then brings judgement down upon the heads of unrepentant rebels perpetually! Romans 1:18.

I also suggested that God reserves His greatest judgement for wolves in sheep's clothing. Those evil deceiving teachers and preaches who are dressed just like the sheep, hiding among the flock, while picking them off one by one through their falsehood. We have to call it out for what it is. Heresy!

No we cannot "contend" for something by doing nothing. We must be in the fight! v18. Believers will all face difficulties for their faith in this world, that's just how it is, Peter is saying. "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved." Yes it is hard on every level. Saved by Jesus' sufferings and death. Living in a world that is at enmity with us which the devil uses to entice us away. While also dealing with the battle of the old person and old ways. So it is hard for us to be saved; but also hard for us to persevere in our faith!

Finally verse 19 says "When we suffer it is according to God's will." So we continue "to contend for the faith doing good" and not capitulating to the world. While "committing ourselves to our faithful Creator!"

And so we pick up the letter in 1 Peter 4:19-5:6 'Humble Authority!'

In verse one sadly, the NIV has omitted the all-important link word, "therefore." While the N.A.S.B., actually has it at the very beginning and with capitals no less, placing even more emphasis upon the link between what has come before, about those difficulties and sufferings which Christians in this life and this world face. So in the face of it all, v19 "we commit ourselves to our faithful Creator and continue to do good." Chapter 5:1 "THEREFORE I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder, and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a sharer of the glory that is about to be revealed."

So after speaking about such difficulties which are the reality of the Christian life this side of heaven, Peter brings them back to the crux of the matter. The Cross! Yes the sufferings and the Cross of Jesus, (which because of God's loving grace and mercy, and His pouring into our hearts of His Holy Spirit) point us to the glory that is to come!

And he mentions firstly “the elders.” And why? Well because it would have been their responsibility to convey Peter's instructions to the broader church. And did you notice? That he speaks to them as equals.

I find really this interesting. But why do I say this? Well if anyone could have applied pressure, I guess, (for the want of a better description) to these relatively new churches, it was Peter and Paul. And Peter in particular perhaps at this point, being Christ's Apostle to the Jews and these predominantly Jewish converts. Because he had been with Jesus from the very beginning of His recorded ministry! In John chapter one, seeing Jesus for the second day in a row with his followers, John the Baptist says in chapter 1:36-37 “ When he saw Jesus passing by he said, “Behold the Lamb of God”. When the two disciples heard him say this they followed Jesus. V40-42. “Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who had heard what John had said and who had followed. The first thing that Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him we have found the Messiah, that is the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said to him; You are Simon son of John you will be called Cephas which means Peter.”

So yes Peter was there from the very beginning of Jesus` recorded ministry. He had the genuine authority of an Apostle. Not simply someone who has been sent to bear testimony to the risen Lord in his life, (which in a real sense all of us are who respond to Christ's call) but the authority of a true Apostle of which there were only ever 14 in all! There were the original 12, which included Judas Iscariot the betrayer, he was replaced by Mathias, and then of course there was Paul!

Apostolic authority came from actually being with Jesus. Being personally chosen by Him. Participating in His ministry with Him, and of course, being personally sent by Him! Now granted Paul's experience was different. But he too had an extraordinary face to face meeting with Jesus and he was nonetheless, personally chosen and sent by Christ Himself in that special revelatory way. No one else can make such a claim. Neither then nor now!

Brothers and sisters, I've mentioned before that there are those around today who make the claim that they are Apostles in that divinely chosen and sent sense. But they are not. And they are all liars! But why am I labouring this point? Well it is simply because there are many today that seem to imply that they are walking on some higher spiritual plane. And of course with a deeper relationship with Jesus than the rest of us mere followers of the Lord. Peter never did this. And it is believed that at his crucifixion, he even refused to be martyred in the same way as Jesus, deeming himself to be unworthy, due to his threefold denial. Tradition has it that he was crucified upside down. Peter saw himself as the servant of Christ among His other servants, while having a lead role. But not their superior! Yes in effect just walking shoulder to shoulder with the other brethren under God's grace through Jesus. And I feel that this is important for us to remember. That yes we all have different roles and different giftings but we are all equal in the sight of God, there are no superstars. Yes we are equally condemned for sin and equally saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

In verse 5b, Peter goes on to speak about humility: “All of you clothe yourselves in humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.” Can you see? That as he speaks so Peter acts. He uses a humble approach as he begins to bring this letter to a close! Yes he has all of the qualifications of an Apostle. Having “witnessed all of Christ's sufferings” and having been personally sent by Him, and yet he is just “a fellow elder,” seeking to fulfil his duties under Christ! Paul, after speaking about “the fruit of the

Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control," Paul writes in Galatians 5:26 "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

And may I suggest that the key to all of this is having a sober view of who we really are. Yes always only at best, simply forgiven sinners! 1 Corinthians 1:26a "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called." Beloved, remembering that without Jesus, (without His Cross) that we were without hope, will always hold us in good stead where pride and vanity are concerned. Yes 1 Peter 5:5b "All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." V6. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

And yet what does he mean by this? Well it is simply echoing chapter 4:19 "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator." We act toward one another in Christ's love, and if we feel we are treated unjustly or we are wronged, we leave it in God's faithful loving hands!

Yes friends, Peter begins to bring this letter to a close with Authoritative Humility. Does it sound familiar? Well it should. What did the people who heard Jesus speak say of Him after His Sermon on the mount? Matthew 7:28-29: "When Jesus had finished saying these things the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."

Dear friends, as I explained some weeks ago now, love, brotherly love acts. And when it does so, it acts with Christlike and Christ inspired humility! It's a rare thing today to meet a truly humble person isn't it. It really is otherworldly. It is so *not* of this loud, obnoxious, rude, opinionated, self-assertive, and self-serving world. It is so disarming and so beautiful in that heavenly sense. It is something that the true believer of Jesus cannot help but be drawn toward as the character of Christ shines through His servants.

And that is Peter's approach as he begins to draw this letter of instruction to a close. He humbly states his qualifications as "a fellow elder who had witnessed all of Christ sufferings," and also one who with them "will share in the glory that is to come." And as he addresses the "Elders" in v2, he makes it very clear that they need to stand up and be counted. And not to take a backward step due to the fearful circumstances that now surrounded them, but rather, (as we need also to do in our own world of evil and godlessness today) to stand up all the more! V2. "Elders, be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you are willing."

Brothers and sisters, the life of the shepherd was not what it is so often romantically portrayed to be. You know the kind of thing, standing there with their staff in hand with their hair blowing in the wind. Almost poetically gazing over the flock, long grey perfectly managed beard, with a profound look on their face, No! Because the life of the shepherd was hard, and extremely lonely and dangerous at times. It took courage and commitment. David speaks of killing the lion and the bear in his defence of the flock. At night the shepherd would pen the sheep while leaving only a small opening through which the sheep, (or anyone or thing) could come and go and that's where the shepherd would sleep. They were literally the gate.

That is why Jesus said. "I am the gate for the sheep." "I am the Good Shepherd." "The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." "My sheep listen to my voice." And in John 14:6:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." Yes the shepherd was the gateway through which the sheep came and went. The shepherd was also the protector and defender. They were used to enduring even the most harsh of the elements. The heat. The rain. The lightning, hail, Thunder, wind. While also standing against wolves and raiders.

And that is what Peter is instructing his "fellow elders" to do. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care." And notice that he calls them "God's flock." The sheep belong not to Pastors or Ministers or even Apostles, but to God! And those men are indeed accountable to God for their Eldership and Stewardship of the sheep come what may. Even all of the teaching of the church, because they are God's people. His Flock. His Church!

Peter continues in v2: "Be shepherds of God's flock under your care serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you are willing according to the will of God not eager for money, (or dishonest gain) but eager to serve."

Now Beloved, although Peter is specifically addressing elders here, we could rightly apply this criteria as the examination guide for anyone, looking to do any ministry in any church. And if we would apply these things to ourselves personally asking: Why am I doing this thing? What are my reasons? What are my goals? What is my agenda? Have I examined myself? Do I have pure intentions? Or is there some other hidden reason for me participating in this thing? Yes when we apply these instructions to ourselves, it will soon become clear to us where our heart truly is!

Dear friends, when we do this it is very sobering. And I'm going to challenge you this morning to do the same within those roles that you are filling for Jesus, (or perhaps indeed you should be considering) in your own service to our Lord. Notice that eldership and its duties, should not be taken on for any other reason, (given the appropriate abilities and a life that reflects those giftings) it should not be taken on for any other reason other than, that it be "in accordance with the will of God." Or in other words, Is this man eldership material?

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 we read: "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devils trap."

Beloved to be totally honest, as someone who seeks to fulfil this role in our church, when I hold the mirror of these qualifications and qualities up to myself I know that oftentimes, I am sorely lacking. Because it is a very tall order. But God is merciful, and you also have been very merciful and patient with me over these many years!

But we do need to address the words, "not because you must, but because you are willing." Often times when a need arises for ministry in churches, (whatever that that need may be) what generally happens is that there is a look around the room and it's, oh you are not doing much, you'll do. And then there can be undo pressure placed upon that person to take on that role. They feel pressured, they feel compelled, (not by God) but by others. Yes they feel

as though they “must.” But The thing is, the Body of Christ is not like managing a business which promotes rising stars. If there is a real need in God’s church, the biblical thing, the godly thing, is to wait for Him to provide someone to fill that role. If they have the abilities and the qualities, and they have the calling from God, which is ratified by those in authority amongst whom they will minister, they are God's choice!

I've seen the opposite of these things over the years and so often it ends up with all involved being disillusioned, and even leaving their church. Friends, Pastors and Overseers are indeed called by God! And again, that calling is ratified by those in authority humbly, and yet Biblically, assessing that calling through those abilities, which are also reflected in their life’s practise. But we cannot expect perfection!

1 Timothy 3:1: “If anyone sets his sight on being an overseer he desires and noble task.” Paul is not saying that it is wrong for men to do this, he is simply saying that they do so in a sober manner. “To whom much is given is much required” the scripture says! And also, that those who take on that role, will be open to pressures and temptations from all sides.

Look again at what Peter says, “not greedy for money, or “from eagerness for base gain.” Brethren, I've been horrified over the past two years as I have watched Satan’s disciples under the banner of Christ, illicit funds from deceived people around the world, with promises of invest in me now, and God will multiply that investment back to you tenfold etc. It is literally, ‘give to my so called ministry and God will give back to you. I guarantee it, because God has told me He will’. But again they lie of course! And I continue to be astounded at the number of these demons coming “as angels of light.” Yes they need your money, so that they can fly their pastoral aeroplanes around the world. One of them even had a giving fund so that he could update his jet. I kid you not.

But no, Jesus said “for the love of money is the root of much evil.” And also “you cannot serve both God and mammon.” No “not greedy for money (eager for base gain) but eager to serve.”

Friends, I've mentioned before how many people, when looking for a home to worship, have their checklist. Their spreadsheet. And they in effect tick off their items on their list. And yet nowhere on their list does this seem to appear “the desire to serve.” Is there a need here that I may be able to fill? Yes their “desire to serve.” Because Jesus Himself said. “For I did not come to be served but to serve.” “And it is better to give than to receive.”

Brothers and sisters “service,” is at the heart of all genuine and sincere ministry. Yes “the desire to serve.” Because Jesus was God's servant and we are His servants. “For I did not come to be served but to serve!”

Peter continues, “not lording it over those entrusted to you but as examples to the flock.” Brethren, surely that is what Jesus did. Not only saved us, but lived as an example to us. Not only being THE WORD and teaching and preaching THE WORD, but living THE WORD! So the burden upon the elder Beloved, should not be underestimated. And we need to try and be considerate of that fact when we even presume to stand where they stand. Because I can assure you, that the true elder knows their many shortcomings far better than we do! But if they follow Jesus` example, elders will speak and act with authority without believing that they are the spiritual elite.

That is what the grand Poobas of Peter`s day did. They believed that they walked up on a higher celestial road than the rest of us mere mortals. But that is not what Jesus did, and that is not Peter`s instruction. The Elder leads by humble authority and example!

Finally, v4: “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of unfading glory.” Beloved, here is the reward of the Elder and indeed here is the reward of us all. It is not accolades or fanfare in the here and now, but “the unfading glory of the crown” of the faithful servant placed upon our head by the Chief Shepherd, the King! Yes “well done my good and faithful servant. Enter into my rest!” Humble authority from God bestowed upon us dear friends through the Holy Spirit. It is not the loud voice. It is not the self-assertive, opinionated approach that we are to live by. But that humble authority that we have from God which is found in the infallibility of His Word! In these things we live and breathe and have our shore foundation!

Yes on Christ the solid Rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand!

Let's pray!