



“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; Whom resist steadfast in the faith,” I Peter 5:8-9.

Steadfast in the Faith

Lesson Aim: A REVIEW of the Faith wherein we stand, as set forth by the twenty-five (25) Articles of The Doctrinal Statement.

L339. Date: December 1964. **Text:** I Peter 5:1-11.

Topic: Faith: Of Believers.

INTRODUCTION— “I must be a better Christian today than I was yesterday.” This resolve should be made anew each morning by every Christian. Why? Because yesterday's experiences have taught him new things and with increased knowledge comes increased responsibility.

Exactly so, each person who has studied the preceding lessons stands before God with greater responsibility than before. These lessons on Baptist doctrine should be studied, understood, held, defended, and propagated. These doctrines are divinely-given principles. They are the truths of God's word. They deserve utmost allegiance by every child of God.

Today's lesson is entitled: “Steadfast in the Faith.” To be “steadfast” means to hold faithfully to a thing, to be unmovable from a conviction. The term “the Faith” refers to the system of doctrine which is set out in the Bible—God's Word. Hence, the lesson challenges each reader to take his stand with Bible truth and refuse to be moved therefrom.

This is a call to knowledge of the truth, conviction concerning it, and loyalty to it. Its challenge is worded by Peter: **“But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,”** I Peter 3:15.

Perilous days are rapidly coming upon the earth. When apostate religious systems come into world unity and form a world church, Baptists

are going to be faced with religious persecutions once again. Baptists will be asked to desert their time-honored faith. They must be ready to “give an answer” to those who oppose them. God, make us able to answer in that day! Until that day arises, we must be busy sharing the truths of God with people all over the world. Herein lies the call to missions and evangelism.

EXPOSITION

I. STEADFAST LEADERS, 5:1-4.

1. Duty: Religious leaders are to feed the flock on God's truths, verses 1-2a. The oversight of the New Testament churches was entrusted to mature and able men called “elders.” Elsewhere the “elder” is called “overseer” or “bishop” or “pastor,” Acts 20:17, 28. The term is a designation of work and not an official title for an office.

Religious leaders, whatever their office, are to “act as shepherds” over the flock of God—His congregation of people in a particular place. The admonition to “feed the flock of God which is among you” includes all the duties of a shepherd: feeding, guarding, tending, and guiding the flock of God. The shepherd should always remember that the flock is God's, not his own. We are only under-shepherds. Therefore, the leader is to work for the good of the flock and not use the flock for his personal benefit.

Since the flock belongs to God, they must be fed on the truths of God. Paul vindicated his ministry in Ephesus by pointing out that he shared with them “all the counsel of God,” Acts 20:20, 26-28. Ezra is remembered as a great Old Testament saint because he set his heart to know God's law and his energies to obey it and teach it, Ezra 7:10. Blessed is the congregation to which God's promise is fulfilled: **“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding,”** Jeremiah 3:15. Such people will be “steadfast in the faith.”

2. Spirit: Religious leaders are to emphasize their teachings by serving in a spirit of sincere humility, verses 2-3. No “constraint” is to be used in taking a position of leadership in the church. One should not serve with a “somebody has to do it” spirit or with an “I'm the boss” spirit. Service is to be rendered for the sole purpose of doing God's will.

One's position in a church should create no feeling of superiority in him. Such will lead to an attempt to become a lord over God's heritage. No high-handed, autocratic rule of the church has been authorized of God for any pastor or church officer to perform. True spiritual power does not lie in

such superficial authority. Jesus has set the rule: **“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant,”** Matthew 20:26-27.

3. Motivation: Religious leaders are to be motivated by sincere concern for the people, being free from selfish ambitions, verse 2. No man of God must serve for “filthy lucre” (base gain). That is, the Lord's service is not to be commercialized. Does this mean that a church should not pay a salary to her pastor? By no means. It suggests, on the other hand, that only an unworthy man would enter the ministry simply to obtain material advantage. Some false prophets taught for the financial remuneration they received (Titus 1:11), but this does not indicate every preacher who receives a salary is a false prophet! The true minister will devote himself to the work of Jesus. The true church where he serves will support him so he may have physical necessities supplied and give himself unceasingly to his work. The man who serves in the name of Christ for salary only is not worthy to be called a minister of Jesus Christ.

4. Example: Religious leaders are to be examples in their steadfast loyalty to the truth, verse 3. Each leader is to be an “ensample to the flock.” The term, “ensample,” means “a print left as an impression after a blow has been struck.” Each preacher, teacher, and Christian believer is to be an “ensample.” The leader is to be an ensample of Jesus Christ and the followers are to copy themselves after him as he follows Jesus, I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17. Failure to match one's self after the mould of Jesus Christ brings dishonor upon His cause. But how can carnal man be moulded after the image of Jesus? It is possible by refusing to be molded after the world and by conformation unto the will of Christ, Romans 12:1-2. All Christian believers, but especially those who are leaders, are exhorted: **“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity . . . Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee,”** I Timothy 4:12, 16. A steadfast leader will inspire the people to a like steadfastness.

II. SUBMISSIVE FOLLOWERS, 5:5-7.

1. Submission to leaders: Those who are being taught should be submissive to their teacher, verse 5. There is no special sanctity in age alone. Peter here assumes that a person will grow in grace as he grows in years. If so, the elders of the congregation would be the wiser teachers. Hence, the younger are taught to be submissive to the leadership afforded by the mature

members. And yet, this does not mean God does not speak to and work through the younger members. There is a place in the church for each saved person, young and old. The point stressed here is that those who are duly elected teachers and leaders should have the cooperation and respect of those who are taught and led. No church can function properly without this cooperation. See I Corinthians 16:15-16.

2. Submission to equals: All Christians are to be humble in their relations to one another, verse 5. **“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.”** This admonition is not for Christians to feel humble, nor to pray for humility, but to act it, to give humility expression in serving others, in taking orders from them, and in fitting into their arrangements. True, this goes against the natural inclinations of the flesh. **“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you,”** Romans 8:9. Moreover, we are not debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh, Romans 8:12. True humility is a most essential Christian virtue. Kenneth Wuest has observed, “The other virtues such as kindness, generosity, justice, goodness, long-suffering, when saturated with humility, are most acceptable and praise worthy, but when seen in a proud person, are like clanging brass or a tinkling cymbal.” The reason why we should be submissive to our leaders is given in Hebrews 13:17.

3. Submission to God: Everyone should be fully submissive before God, verses 5-6. Of the six things which the Lord hates—of the seven things which are an abomination unto Him—the first is **pride!** See Proverbs 6:16-19. Peter emphatically states here, **“God "resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”** The word “proud” means “to show oneself as above.” The word “resist” is a military term which describes an army set for battle. So God is shown to draw up His armies (His own invincible powers) to do battle with the proud. While He is irresistibly opposed to the proud, His favor is shown to the humble. Wisdom counsels, **“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.”**

Humility before God is not mere resignation. It is an active cooperation. It is not like a resignation of oneself to illness, but submission to a physician from whom one will receive treatment. Jesus, Himself, has promised that true humility will bring exaltation, Luke 14:11. God knows the deepest recesses of our wills. He honors our trust and opposes our self-confidence. No wonder James advises, **“Submit yourselves therefore to God,”** James 4:7.

This part of the study may be applied in this manner. The time may soon come (or is, indeed, already here) when it would be easier to believe

nothing and do nothing so as to be popular. Christians have little question about God's will in such a day. It is, "Study to know the truth, then live it and teach it in humble dedication to Me." This kind of submission honors God.

III. VIGILANT CONGREGATIONS, 5:8-11.

Faithful Christians will produce faithful congregations in all the churches. Peter gives four reasons why Christians should be steadfast and faithful.

1. Adversary: Christians should be vigilant because of their adversary, verse 8. God's people are challenged to be sober (mentally self-controlled) and vigilant (awake and watchful). They are challenged by an opponent who is the devil. (The Greek word for devil means "to traduce, slander, accuse, defame.") He is described in a fourfold manner. (1) He is dangerous—"a roaring lion." (2) He is hunting victims—"walketh about." (3) He is determined to destroy—"seeking whom he may devour." (4) He is equally threatening to all—"seeking (anyone) whom he may devour." No wonder God's people are called to alert watchfulness. Satan must be resisted and opposed. How is he repelled? By a confident trust in God and a firm resolve that we will obey Him alone. James writes these words of encouragement, **"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,"** James 4:7. Satan is strong but God is stronger, I John 4:4.

2. Example: Christians should be vigilant following the example of their brethren, verse 9. Satan can be resisted successfully! The records of our predecessors in the faith testify to this truth. Read Hebrews 11 and see the Biblical record of the "heroes of the faith" who successfully resisted his attacks. There has been no time when Satan was not opposed to the work of God. From the time of the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden unto the moment these words are read, Satan has been trying to thwart the work of God among men. Trials today are no worse than they have been before. Christian brethren of former generations stood fast for Christ. So can we of the twentieth century! **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,"** I Corinthians 10:13, Take courage, Christian brother, for the God who stood by His people in times past stands by you today. He gives you victory through the Lord

Jesus Christ!

3. Strength: Christians should be vigilant because God will use the trials they endure to strengthen them in His grace, verse 10. God is “the God of all grace (favour)” and will surely reveal His grace to His tried children. He has pledged Himself to lead them through troubles so as to make them mature in things of the Spirit. If trials will establish, strengthen, and settle them, He leads on in that direction. The leading of God is not only in the way of trial, however, for He has called us “unto his eternal glory.”

God can be counted on to lead believers unto glory because He is the God of all grace. No believer can afford to grow negligent about service in the face of such wonderful prospects. The hope of heaven should inspire Christians to a most energetic service for the Lord who makes heaven ready for our coming. **“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,”** I Corinthians 2:9.

4. Doxology: Christians should be vigilant because it will glorify God, verse 11. The Christian is saved that he might glorify God, Ephesians 1:7. Such glory is due to be rendered to Him through His church, Ephesians 3:20-21. By living for His glory, Christians point others to the Father in Heaven that they might come to know Him also, Matthew 5:16.

QUESTIONS

1. How does today's study relate to the lessons of this quarter?
2. How does 1 Peter 3:15 relate to this study?
3. Who composes the “flock of God” in today's lesson?
4. Who are the “elders”?
5. What is humility? How is it manifest?
6. In what sense are all Christian's examples to others?
7. How can Christians be submissive to one another?
8. Why does God hate pride?
9. What is the nature of the Christian's adversary?
10. What encourages faithfulness in the Christian?