



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

Stedfast 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.

L508. Date: March 1960. **Text:** I Peter 5:1-11. **Topic:** Faith: Of Believers.

INTRODUCTION-God holds His children responsible according to their knowledge of duty and ability to perform it. With increasing capacity to serve comes increasing responsibility. The study of these thirteen lessons on Baptist doctrine has brought an added challenge to make these truths a part of our life. We must conform our teaching and practice to them. We must share them with others that they may know them also.

The Lord tells us that to know God's will and not do it is serious. Those who assume the position of teachers (thus professing to be capable of leading others) are judged with a more strict judgment than others, James 3:1. The more responsible is one's position, the more is demanded of him by the Lord. Thus our responsibility grows daily and weekly as we have more experience, learn more, and grow in grace. This means each one who reads this lesson is more responsible to God now than he was last week!

Observe the title of the lesson for today: “Stedfast in the Faith.” These things we have studied this quarter are not merely facts. They are divinely given principles. Each believer is expected to embrace them, to defend them, to propagate them, and only thus is he “Stedfast in the Faith.” To be stedfast is to hold faithfully to a thing, to be unmovable from a conviction. “The Faith” refers to the system of doctrine which the Bible sets out, not just to the act of believing. Thus believers are challenged to determine what is Bible truth and to stand by it regardless of opposition.

EXPOSITION

I. The Responsibility of Leadership, 5:1-4.

1. Religious leaders are to feed the flock, verses 1-2a. Peter addresses those responsible for the pastoral care of the local church. He calls them “elder,” a term first used of the aged but later applied to an officer in the local church. Elsewhere the “elder” is called “overseer” or “bishop, Acts 20:17, 28; I Timothy 3:2. It is not just the official name for ministers. The elders were “presbyters” and thus senior leaders. The admonition given these leaders is to “act as shepherds” over the flock. To “*feed the flock of God which is among you*” includes all the duties of a shepherd, feeding, tending, guarding, and guiding the flock of God. These shepherds are reminded that the flock is God's, not theirs, and they are only under shepherds. Thus should all those who have the responsibility of religious leadership feel. To teach a Sunday school class, to lead a devotional service, to have a part in visitation, to pray for the progress of the church—all these are religious services unto God. We are His and can be faithful only as we serve Him through serving men. The point is well made here that the pastor is the servant of the congregation and the teacher the servant of the class, not the congregation or class being the servant of the pastor or teacher.

2. Religious leaders should serve in the right spirit—sincere humility, verses 2b, 3a. They are to take “*the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly;*” “*Neither as being lords over God's heritage.*” Positions of leadership in the flock of God are not to be taken with a sense of compulsion (the “somebody has to do it” spirit). They are to be assumed with a sense of the purpose of God being fulfilled therein. Each one freely chooses to do God's will. Again, when that position has been filled it is not to be with a spirit of superiority. This leads to a tendency to become a lord over God's heritage. While God has given the pastor a certain authority in the church, He would never approve a high-handed autocratic rule over the flock. This is forbidden the true shepherd. Jesus expresses it thus: “*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. The religious leader should serve unselfishly, verse 2c. The man of God (preacher or teacher) is not to serve for “filthy lucre.” That is, he is not to be moved by desire for base or sordid gain. The Lord's service is not to be commercialized. This seems to imply that during Peter's lifetime some ministers received remuneration—which is not here forbidden—and that some, ministers were engaged in it simply as a means of obtaining material

advantage. At least, there were some false prophets who did so, Titus 1:11. The true minister of God must never allow his ministry to be crippled by selfish ambitions nor greed for gain. The one who best serves the Lord is he who serves without thought of self but whose whole life is wrapped up in Jesus Christ.

4. The religious leader is to be an example, verse 3b. Instead of selfish, ambitious service, the local pastor is exhorted to become an example to the flock. The word “ensample” means “a print left as an impression after a blow has been struck.” Thus under-shepherds should be living patterns or models of the Chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus. All those who are leaders in the church should set their lives as patterns to be copied by the flock. How much reproach has been brought upon the cause of Christ by a leader who proved himself unworthy. Unsaved men are much more likely to remember Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:16-20, than a man like Barnabas, Acts 11:24. No wonder the leaders are exhorted: “*Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,*” I Timothy 4:12.

II. The Submission of Brethren, 5:5-7.

1. The younger should be submissive to the elder, verse 5a. The ideal in Christian life is that one grows more mature in grace as he grows older in years. Peter seems to have this in mind as he exhorts the younger to subject themselves to the leadership of the elders. Let us remember that in the church there is no special sanctity in age alone. The older members of the congregations should be respected as leaders if they have grown mature in grace. Of course, the younger are sometimes tempted to an unhealthy self-assertion and it is wise that mature leadership should be afforded them. It is the fortunate church whose elderly members have grown in grace and are worthy of the confidence placed in them by younger members. Every person, young and old, has a place in the work of the church.

2. A spirit of true humility should exist between all brethren, verse 5b. “*Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.*” Humility is “lowliness of mind” and is fundamentally an attitude of mind. The admonition here is not to feel humble, or 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. Thus we will be able “to serve one another.” This one trait of humility will qualify one for true Christian service. Kenneth Wuest has observed, “The other virtues such as kindness, generosity, justice, goodness, long-suffering, when saturated with humility,

are most acceptable and praiseworthy, but when seen in a proud person, are like clanging brass or a tinkling cymbal.”

3. All should be fully submissive before God, verses 5b-6. How plainly does Peter stress that *“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”* The word “resisteth” is a Greek military term which pictures an army prepared for battle. The word “proud” means “to show oneself as above” and refers to him who feels he is above others. Thus does God draw up His armies against the man who is proud! God watches the actions of all men. He is against the haughty but grants favour to the lowly. The command to *“humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God”* is only logical in view of the above statements. This is not just a passive resignation but an active cooperation. It is not like one who resigns himself to illness, but rather like a man who submits himself to the treatment of a physician that cure may be effected. Jesus has promised that true humility will bring about exaltation, Luke 14:11. In the Christian life, the way up is down; the way to honor is through humility! God knows and understands. He honors our trust and opposes our self-confidence. No wonder Peter admonishes, *“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”*

III. The Vigilance of All, 5:8-11.

1. Christians must be vigilant because of their adversary, verse 8. To be “sober” is to be mentally self-controlled. To be “vigilant” is to be awake and watchful. The devil is identified as our “adversary.” The word devil is from the Greek word *diabolos* which means “to traduce, slander, accuse, defame,” and well describes the character and actions of Satan against the saints. Thus Peter is urging Christians to be thoroughly self-controlled and alert because of the adversary who is always active and looking for opportunity to attack. His aim is to sow discord, to break fellowship, by malicious suggestion. He accuses God to men, men to God, and men to each other. His aim is to undermine confidence, to silence confession, to get us to stop serving. He ought to be resisted and opposed; He can be repelled by a confident trust in God and a firm resolve that we will not submit to his methods, James 4:7.

2. Christians must be vigilant because of the example of their brethren, verse 9. The believer ought to stand firm against Satan. He cannot fight him, but can resist the onslaught of evil. This is not a call to an offensive against Satan, but to a firm holding of the ground in the face of his attacks. This is not possible for the believer alone, for Satan must be resisted by standing steadfast “in the faith.” That is, the exercise of faith in the strengthening and

protecting power of God will bring victory. The trial of no single Christian is unique. All the brotherhood have had to suffer like trials that any particular one faces. Paul writes, *“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. With the example of victorious brethren and the help of God, the Christian need not fall.

3. Christians must be vigilant in view of the glory awaiting, verse 10. God is “the God of all grace” in that He is the source of all help. This God has pledged Himself to lead the believer through suffering to make him mature and to establish him, by strengthening and settling him, and thus lead him on to glory. God can be counted on to lead the believer unto victory because He is the God of all grace and because He has called him to actually partake of His own glory! God's grace will establish the believers firmly and His promise would assure them of coming glory. No believer can afford to fall by the way and be negligent about service in the face of wonderful prospects. The reality of heaven should inspire to energetic service. *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have enterer into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,”* I Corinthians 2:9.

4. Christians must be vigilant because of the glory due to God, verse 11. This verse is the language of a prayer with a “may it be so” inferred in its spirit. To the statement an “Amen” adds an emphatic endorsement. Here is the foundation for the fullest confidence and courage. The word “dominion” literally means “strength” or “might” and refers to God's ability to keep under control, to acquire and to retain the mastery. This power belongs to God now and for eternity. He has saved us for the express purpose that we might serve to the honour of His glory, Ephesians 1:12. If our lives fail to glorify Him it is because we quench and grieve the Holy Spirit which seeks to so lead our lives that His will would be done. Can one honestly say he loves the Lord unless his life demonstrates it by loyal service and faithful devotion?

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of James 3:1?
2. Define: “the faith,” “filthy lucre.”
3. What names were given the leaders of the New Testament churches?
4. List some characteristics of a good minister given in this lesson.

5. Discuss humility as a ruling attitude between brethren.
6. Give some reasons why the believer should be vigilant.
7. Discuss briefly the character of Satan.
8. Describe the glory awaiting the children of God.
9. Why is doctrinal purity important to a church?
10. Let several class members testify as to the meaning of this quarter's study in their own spiritual lives.