

# CORRUPT PASTORS & LEADERS

Sunday, April 19, 2026 -- 1 PETER series -- msg 30 -- Pastor Andrew Coleman

## 1 PETER 5:1-5

English Standard Version (ESV)

**1** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

## CONTEXT & BACKGROUND:

- 1) The letter of 1 Peter is written to churches in the Mediterranean world about 35 years after Jesus was crucified, rose again and then ascended to heaven.
- 2) The Apostle Peter went from being 'the open mouth insert foot disciple' to a wise, powerful missionary-leader to churches spread across the Roman empire.
- 3) Many of those Christians and churches were being persecuted for their faith and walk in Jesus. (Peter too would soon be executed.)
- 4) This letter was written and distributed to them to encourage them, instruct them, and warn them so they may be faithful to God in a world that was hostile to their faith and practice as Christians.
- 5) Peter now turns his attention to Pastors/Elders as he writes this letter. He writes both to the pastors/elders themselves but also to the believers in their congregations. He intends to either remind or set the standard for how a pastor/elder should live and lead.

## WHY DOES PETER HAVE TO ADDRESS THE PASTORS?

- I. True spiritual leaders are provided and ordained by God. They are God's gift to the church.

### EPHESIANS 4:11-14

*11 And **He gave** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

(Notice the dangerous environment at the end.)

## II. False spiritual leaders of have always been a problem — in the OT and the NT.

We need to remember the Old Testament corrupt leaders.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 10:11 Paul writes...

*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

### 1. SAUL (first king of Israel) — The King Who Rejected God’s Word

- Disobeyed God’s command regarding sacrifice (1 Sam. 13)
- Spared Agag and disobeyed in the Amalekite war (1 Sam. 15)
- Rejected God’s Word → God rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:22–23)
- Ended by consulting a medium (1 Sam. 28)

#### 1 Samuel 15:22–23

*“And Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice... For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.’”*

Saul’s downfall was not ignorance—but **selective obedience**.  
He maintained outward religion while rejecting God’s authority.

### 2. SOLOMON (King David’s son) — Wisdom Undermined by Compromise

- Given unparalleled wisdom
- Married many foreign wives who turned his heart
- Built high places for idols (1 Kings 11:4–8)

#### 1 Kings 11:4

*“For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”*

A man of unparalleled wisdom allowed **relational compromise** to erode his devotion.

### 3. KING JEROBOAM (1st king of northern kingdom) — The Architect of False Worship

- Established golden calves at Bethel and Dan
- Created a false priesthood and counterfeit worship system
- Became the standard phrase: “the sin of Jeroboam”

#### 1 Kings 12:28–30

*“So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, ‘You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel...’ Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one.”*

Jeroboam **intentionally reshaped worship** for political convenience, leading an entire nation into idolatry.

#### 4. **KING AHAB** — The King Who Sold Himself to Evil

1 Kings 21:25–26

*“There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab... He acted very abominably in going after idols...”*

Ahab represents leadership that is **morally weak** and **spiritually corrupted**, enabling widespread evil.

#### 5. **QUEEN JEZEBEL** — The Aggressive Promoter of False Religion

1 Kings 18:4

*“When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them...”*

Jezebel actively worked to **destroy true worship** and replace it with idolatry.

#### 6. **ELI (High Priest and Judge)** — The Passive Priest

1 Samuel 2:29

*“Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings... and honor your sons above me...?”*

Eli’s failure was not overt rebellion, but **failure to restrain sin** in those under his authority.

#### 7. **HOPHNI & PHINEHAS (sons of Eli)** — Corrupt Priests who stole offerings & sexual immorality

1 Samuel 2:12

*“Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.”*

1 Samuel 2:17

*“Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD...”*

They used sacred office for **personal gain and immorality**, corrupting worship itself!

#### 8. **AHITHOPHEL (counselor to David)** — The Trusted Counselor Who Betrayed

2 Samuel 16:23

*“Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God...”*

2 Samuel 17:23

*“When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed... he set his house in order and hanged himself...”*

A man of great influence who turned his wisdom toward **rebellion and self-interest**.

#### 9. **BALAAAM (prophet)** — The Prophet Motivated by **Greed**.

Numbers 22:18

*“Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD...”*

Numbers 31:16

*“These, on Balaam’s advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD...”*

Though he spoke truth at times, Balaam’s heart was driven by **financial gain**, leading others into sin.

#### 10. **SAMSON (Judge/deliverer)** — A Deliverer Undermined by **Fleshly Weakness**.

Judges 16:20

*“But he did not know that the LORD had left him.”*

Samson shows that **spiritual gifting without holiness** leads to collapse.

## We also need to remember the NEW TESTAMENT corrupt leaders.

### Some specific named examples:

#### Judas Iscariot (one of the Twelve Disciples)

- John 12:4–6 — Judas, one of the Twelve, is exposed as a thief, not caring for the poor.
- John 13:2, 27 — Satan entered into him.
- John 17:12 — “*the son of destruction.*”
- Acts 1:16–20, 25 — he turned aside from his ministry and apostleship.

Judas is the clearest example of a man holding the highest kind of visible ministry position while lacking a true relationship with God and integrity.

#### Diotrephes

- 3 John 9–10  
He “*likes to put himself first,*” rejects apostolic authority, talks wicked nonsense, refuses to welcome faithful brothers, and expels others from the church.  
This is one of the sharpest NT portraits of a church leader corrupted by pride and control.

#### Hymenaeus

- 1 Timothy 1:19–20 — made shipwreck of the faith.
- 2 Timothy 2:17–18 — his teaching spread like gangrene; he swerved from the truth, saying the resurrection had already happened, upsetting the faith of many.

#### Alexander

- 1 Timothy 1:19–20 — paired with Hymenaeus as one handed over to Satan.
- 2 Timothy 4:14–15 — “*Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm*”; strongly opposed Paul’s message.

#### Philetus

- 2 Timothy 2:17–18  
Along with Hymenaeus, spread destructive doctrinal error and upset the faith of many.

#### “Jezebel” in Thyatira

- Revelation 2:20–23 A self-styled prophetess in the church who taught and seduced Christ’s servants into sexual immorality and idolatry.

## UNNAMED FALSE NEW TESTAMENT LEADERS & GROUPS:

Balaam-type teachers in Pergamum  
Nicolaitans (corrupt influential group)  
False apostles at Corinth ‘super apostles’  
Preachers with bad/false motives:

**Philippians 1:15-17** Paul writes...

*15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.*

Religious teachers motivated by greed.  
Shepherds feeding themselves.

**Revelation 2:14**

**Revelation 2:6, 15** corrupt influential group  
**2 Corinthians 11:5, 13-15**

**Titus 1:10-11**

**Jude 12**

## **2 CORINTHIANS 11:13-15 Paul says watch out for disguises!**

*13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

## **ACTS 20:29-30 Paul warns the Ephesians of wolves to come...**

*29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

## **TITUS 1:10-11 Titus is told to clean out the churches on the island of Crete...**

*10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*

## **1 TIMOTHY 6:3-5 Timothy is taught what to watch out for...**

*3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

## **MATTHEW 24 Jesus extensively and repeatedly warned of bad leaders to come...**

*3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.*

*10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.*

*23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.*

## **CHRIST, THE PERFECT PASTOR WHO LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE!**

### **1 PETER 2:24-25**

*"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*

**JOHN 10:11** Jesus speaking to His disciples...

***I am the good shepherd.**  
**The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.***