

Your Anxiety, Your Adversary, and Your Assurance

1 Peter 5:6-14

Suffering and Gospel Hope. Peter's letter has been filled with teaching on these subjects, and the conclusion highlights them as well.

We've noted that Peter **envisions faithful Christian living in less than ideal circumstances.**

- We too are in less than ideal circumstances.
- But we're exhorted **to stand firm, to remain faithful in our trials.**
- And today we also add to the list of trials **anxiety** and our **adversary**.

Peter cites a bit of **Psalm 55:22** when he urges us to "cast our anxieties on God who cares for us."

- Consider this Psalm with me briefly, as it fits so neatly with the thrust of 1 Peter.
- It **emphasizes trouble, affliction, enemies, and the need for God's help, and the trustworthiness of God.**
- When NT writers cite OT texts is important to consider the whole context of that citation because it is likely also in the mind of the writer.

Psalm 55: Cast Your Burden on the Lord

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David. [A Psalm that **teaches...** to cast our burdens on the Lord, trusting in him in hard times]

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God,
and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! [a plea for help]

2 Attend to me, and answer me;

I am restless in my complaint and I moan,

3 because of the noise of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the wicked. [mention of enemies]

For they drop trouble upon me,
and in anger they bear a grudge against me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me; [desperation continues]
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.

6 And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest;

7 yes, I would wander far away;

I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah

8 I would hurry to find a shelter

from the raging wind and tempest." [Temptation to flee; but there's no shelter outside of God;
trusting God in hard times is hard, but the alternatives are false sources of trust]

9 Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; [prevent them from working together]
for I see violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go around it
on its walls,

and iniquity and trouble are within it;

11 ruin is in its midst;

oppression and fraud

do not depart from its marketplace.

12 For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
then I could bear it;

it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—
then I could hide from him.

13 But it is you, a man, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend. [so even his friend is against him]

14 We used to take sweet counsel together;
within God's house we walked in the throng.

15 Let death steal over them; [praying for deliverance]
let them go down to Sheol alive;
for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart.

16 But I call to God,
and the Lord will save me.

17 Evening and morning and at noon [day is filled with prayer; one of the key weapons in
spiritual warfare]

I utter my complaint and moan,

and he hears my voice. ["complain about God: sin. Complain to God: Psalm]

18 He redeems my soul in safety
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.

19 God will give ear and humble them, [assurance/confidence/reversal - 1 Pet 5.5]
he who is enthroned from of old, Selah

because they do not change
and do not fear God.

20 My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; [the pain sharpens]
he violated his covenant. [Their friendship involved a solemn obligation to each other]

21 His speech was smooth as butter,
yet war was in his heart;

his words were softer than oil,
yet they were drawn swords.

22 Cast your burden on the Lord, [Septuagint: "Cast your anxieties"]
and he will sustain you; [he doesn't necessarily remove troubles/enemies, but he sustains you]
he will never permit

the righteous to be moved.

23 But you, O God, will cast them down
into the pit of destruction;
men of blood and treachery
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in you.

So we bring that with us:

- **The calls to trust God.**
- **The call to be aware of our enemies: the devil and those who afflict God's people;**
- **The call to rest in God's promises.**

I want organize the exposition in three parts: (1) dealing with your anxiety, (2) dealing with your adversary, and (3) resting in your assurance.

**All three are a call to trust God, as Peter has been teaching us: "entrust your soul"
"Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges justly"**

#1: Dealing with Your Anxiety (5:6-7)

How do we Deal with it? With humble trust in our powerful and compassionate God.

Recall **verse 5: clothe ourselves with humility toward "one another"** – then echoing Proverbs 3:4 – "for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

6: Now the focus goes from humility toward **one another** to humility **before God.**

- Since God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble: be humble before God.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty **hand** of God" (6a)

- The **hand of god** is an Old Testament image of God's power and God's deliverance, particularly in regard to the Exodus event (Ex 3:19; 13:3, 9, 14, 16; Deut 3:24; 4:34).
- This verb is passive imperative (lit. **"be humbled"**)
- **Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand involves giving ourselves entirely to him, submitting to his sovereign ordering of our lives.**
- The point is that the Christians should **accept the state of humiliation** that has been forced on them, as a marginalized group of believers.
- **"Whatever my lot, though has taught me to say..."**

Why? "So that at the proper time **he may exalt you**" (6b).

- That is, one the last day, when all is said and done, **God will exalt the faithful.**
- This kind of statement is made throughout the Scriptures (cf., Luke 14).
- You **may suffer now, but you will be exalted later.**
- Our mighty God will lift us up!
- Peter envisions an **eschatological reversal**. The proud will be humbled, and the humble will be exalted. (cf., 4:13).

7: Then notice how verse 7 is connected to verse 6.

- It's not a new sentence but a clause continuing the thought of verse 6, **giving us a specific way to humble ourselves; namely, "by casting all our anxieties on him"**

In other words, failing to give your anxieties to **God is prideful and arrogant.**

- It's assuming that you are the **sovereign one**, rather than God.
- Much of our worry comes **from thinking we know better than God; or that we can live without depending on his grace, trying to control everything.**
- **Humility manifests itself in giving your anxieties to God.**
 - It's an act of humble trust.
 - In this case, it had to do with trusting God in the face of persecution.
- **Pride manifests itself in failing to give your anxiety to God.**

The solution to our anxiety is believing in and resting in God's care of us.

"Anxiety" – None of you have any anxiety do you?!

What did Peter mean by this?

- The word is the same word Jesus used in Matt 6 and Paul in Philippians 4
- The term (*merimnan*) means **"to be drawn in different directions, to be divided or distracted."**
- When we are anxious, we are being **distracted from trusting God.**
- Anxiety pulls us in different directions so that we don't have single minded trust in God.

So Give it to God!

- **"Pray and let God worry" (Luther)**
- Giving our anxiety to God makes sense for two reasons: He's **all-powerful** and **he cares for us!**
- The God who parted the Red Sea in power says, "Give it to me!"
- The God put forward his Son in love says, "Give it to me!"
 - He's mighty — he can take it.
 - He's loving — he's not indifferent nor detached.
 - He cares for his people!
 - Romans 8:14–15 (ESV): . 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"
 - Cast your burden on the FATHER
- The word **"casting"** cast means to **"throw something upon something or someone"**
- The verb occurs elsewhere only in Luke 19:35, where the disciples toss their cloaks over a donkey as a saddle for Jesus
- **You may think of fishing... or like a game of cornhole – just let it go.... Don't try to control it after you release it... that happens a lot in bowling!**
- This is similar to Philippians 4:6-7, right?

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul says relieve anxiety through prayer.

It's when we have a humble trust in God, casting our cares upon him that we experience God's peace.

#2: Dealing with Your Adversary (5:8-9)

Peter teaches us to deal with our adversary by faith-filled resistance.

8: “**Be Sober-minded**” (cf. 1:13; 4:7) – think clearly about the devil.

- Realize you're in a war!
- Don't ignore this reality!

“**Be watchful**” – be alert, be vigilant.

- The Devil doesn't do social distancing!
- He's always at work....

Your “**adversary**” [enemy] is “**the devil**”

- He is opposed to us; he is raging against us.
- He seeks to divide Christians.
- The term *devil* [diabolos] means *slanderer* or *accuser*. (eg., his accusations against Job: Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5)
 - Often the devil uses others to do his work through slander and gossip.

Like a “**lion**,” he wants to “**devour**” Christians.

- **Revelation 12:9-11** he is raging because he knows his days are short.
- He's a defeated foe (“I saw Satan fall like lightning,” Lk 10:18); a sore loser, seeking to divide Christians, and destroy their faith.
- The devil wants persecuted Christians to deny Christ and lose their eschatological reward.

He is “**roaring**” conveys this idea that he wants Christians to **be afraid**, so as to not persevere in the face of trials.

- But we must remember this lion is no match for the Lion of Judah.

9a: Peter doesn't tell us explicitly how the devil wants to devour us, but I think verse 7 gives us the main idea: he wants to destroy our faith.

- Schreiner: “The call to resistance does not summon believers to do Herculean acts on God's behalf.... No, resisting the devil means that believers remain firm in their faith, that is, in their trust in God.”

“**resist him**” “**firm in your faith**”

- He calls us to **faith-filled resistance**.
- Again, the context in view is one of suffering as a Christian in a hostile society.

- The devil is behind much of this persecution (Rev 2:10).
- And he there are many “schemes of the devil.” (Eph 6).
 - Luther: Ink stains at the Castle where he threw his inkwell at the devil!
 - Some of you may feel that way about doing online school!
- But don't cave in, remain steadfast in your trust in God.

Scripture teaches that we remain faithful through acts like:

1. Prayer
2. Taking up the sword of the Spirit
3. Being in community. Isolated people can be easy prey.
4. Faithful obedience.

James 4:7 says when we do, “resist the devil, and he will flee from you”

- That is, you have the power to resist him.
- When you are tempted to go to that website, “Resist the devil.”
- When you are tempted to lash out in anger, “Resist the devil.”
- When you are tempted to doubt God's provision, “Resist the devil.”
- Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- Matt 4:11 “Then the devil left him” (not for good but from that intense moment)
- Luke 4:13, “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.”

Some moments are particularly intense, but in Christ, we can overcome in these times of temptation.

And when we're under his attack, we look toward the future, when “the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet.” (Rom 16:20).

- One day all the schemes will be over, as our defeated foe is vanquished forever.

9b: More encouragement. The fact that other believers around the world are experiencing similar suffering, and dealing with the roaring lion, serves as an encouragement for several reasons.

1. It reminds us that you are **not alone or isolated, suffering in a unique way.**
2. It reminds us that the bond that unites you to Jesus Christ also **joins you to the family of God throughout the world.**
 - This means others care about us when we suffer, and we can about them when they suffer. (1 Cor 12:26)
3. It reminds us that suffering is **normal aspect of the Christian faith.**
 - God has his purposes. And that suffering will cease one day as glory will be revealed.
4. **It inspires hope,** for the spread of persecution and reality trials points to the nearness of the consummation: glory awaits us.

Transition: Deal with your anxiety through humble trust; deal with your adversary through faith-filled resistance.

- You can see how important your faith is: “more precious than gold” (1:7)
- But Peter does more than give instruction for enduring the trials, he also gives us a glorious word of hope and assurance....

#3: Resting in Your Assurance (5:10-11)

Peter finishes this section by reminding the Christians of the assurance of God’s saving purposes. He finishes where he started, with the amazing grace of God.

10: Suffering for a “little while” (cf, 1:6) is contrasted with eternal glory (5:10).

- It’s short compared to eternal joy that is to come!

The “God of all grace” has secured this eternal glory for us.

He “**called** us” – effectual calling to salvation, which includes the calling to eternal glory.

10b: He “himself” will restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Notice the four things God will do all for the faithful.

All four are in the future tense, assuring us of what God will do.

1. **He will restore** – “repair” – a word used to set a dislocated bone or restoring fishing nets.

- Peter knew this very well from experience.
- Jesus restored this guy, and the God of all grace continues to restore sinners.
- And he will fully restore us in new creation.

2. **He will confirm** – it means to establish or permanently fix.

We have a firm position in Christ.

3. **He will strengthen** – a verb only used here in the NT.

- Job uses it to speak of the strength of a lion.
- We are strengthened as he endure the roar of the lion with a greater lion, in Jesus Christ.
- We will have full strength in new creation where there’s no death or sickness.

4. **He will establish** – set a firm foundation for us. It speaks of security.

All of these remind us of the hymn, “**How firm a foundation.**”

God will do this, as he does the saving work of exalting us in due time.

The natural reaction to this grace is doxology: “to him be the glory forever.”

To the God of all grace be the glory... to the God who restores, confirms, strengthens and establishes us – to him be the glory.

We will suffer for a little while, but eternal glory awaits us.

Final Words (5:12-13)

12: Peter mentions Silvanus, who carried the letter or served as secretary. This is most likely Silas. (2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:1).

Purpose: exhort them in the true grace of God; to stand firm in it.

He has given important instruction for enduring trials with gospel hope.

Stand firm in it. Don't waver. Stand firm in God's grace and truth.

13: "She who is in Babylon" a reference to the church in Rome.

Babylon means not home – to be dislocated, to be exiles.

- They were elect exiles in Rome ("who is likewise chosen") send greetings to elect exiles in Asia Minor
- This is a final reminder that we are strangers and sojourners; we're citizens of heaven.
- This bookends the letter.
- We're not in new Jerusalem while on earth; we're like exiles in Babylon.

"Mark" is mentioned, apparently as now a key partner with Peter.

- He had left Paul (though they later reconciled).
- Peter would have known Mark from the early days as the church met in Mark's mother's home (Acts 12:12)
- Further, the gospel of Mark is most likely Peter's gospel written by Mark.
- Peter had a fatherly love for the younger John Mark. "my son"

5:14: Greet one another with a holy kiss obviously disregards social distancing! (Now, "An elbow of love")

- This is a common admonition in the New Testament.
- The church was to be marked by warmth and affection.

The letter concludes with a peace wish: "Peace to all of you are in Christ."

These Christians were afflicted with many trials, but they could experience peace because of their union with Christ.

And so can we.

We can know this peace because we know the Prince of Peace – and we know that the God of peace will one day crush Satan under our feet.

- So then, let us deal with anxiety through humble trust, casting our anxieties on the God who cares for us;
- Let us deal with our adversary through faith-filled resistance;

• **And let us rest in the saving grace of God who will complete what he began in us.**

This is how we will endure to the end.

All of it, made possible because we're in Christ.

“Jesus Priceless Treasure”

Jesus, priceless treasure,
Source of purest pleasure,
Truest friend to me.
Ah, how long in anguish
Shall my spirit languish,
Yearning, Lord, for Thee?
Thou art mine, O Lamb divine!
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,
Naught I ask beside Thee.

In Thine arms I rest me;
Foes who would molest me
Cannot reach me here.
Though the earth be shaking,
Every heart be quaking,
Jesus calms my fear.
Lightnings flash and thunders crash;
Yet, though sin and hell assail me,
Jesus will not fail me.

Satan, I defy thee;
Death, I now decry thee;
Fear, I bid thee cease.
World, thou shalt not harm me
Nor thy threats alarm me
While I sing of peace.
God's great power guards every hour;
Earth and all its depths adore Him,
Silent bow before Him.

— Johann Franck, 1653