

A PEOPLE OF GRACE
1 Peter 5:9b-14
May 3, 2009 – Grace Covenant Baptist Church

I. Resist the devil (5:8-9a)

1. **Acknowledging he is real**
2. **Understanding his purposes (v. 8)**
3. **Utilizing your defenses (v. 9a)**

II. Trust in God (5:9b-11)

“**Firm in your faith**” does not mean that believers *are* firm in their faith. He explains what resistance to the devil really means. The call to resist does not summon believers to do great acts of faith on God’s behalf or to do great works for God. That truth is found in other places in Scripture, but that is not Peter’s intent here. Resisting the devil means that believers remain firm, that is, steadfast, in their trust in God. Believers triumph over Satan when they continue to trust in God, believing that He truly cares for them and will sustain them to the end. “**Firm in your faith**” is Peter’s counterpart to Habakkuk, “the just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). Just as Habakkuk needed a reminder that God was present in his difficult circumstances, so too those who are in the midst of sufferings for Christ can have peace when they submit to God, standing firm in their faith.

What reasons does Peter give for us to trust God in the midst of the storm?

1. Promises fellowship in our afflictions (v. 9b)

Elijah in 1 Kings 18 – Prophets of Baal and 1 Kings 19 – fleeing from Jezebel

1 Kings 19:18 – Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.

Paul in Acts 18 – Paul at Corinth

Acts 18:9-10 – ⁹ And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

Peter reminds them, “**knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.**” Their circumstances were not unusual or unique to them. Peter says that the Christian should expect suffering, and in the midst of it remember that we are not alone. There are others who have been through or are in the midst of a suffering who can encourage us and empathize with us.

(**Hebrews 11**, then **Hebrews 11:39 - 12:1** – ³⁹ And all these, having gained approval *through their faith*, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ because God had provided something better for

us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. ^{12:1} Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us.

2. Promises to limit our afflictions (v. 10a)

“After you have suffered for a little while.” What follows attributes our eternal glory, our final rewards, to the grace of God. The believer, who has truly humbled himself before God and others, will be exalted (5:6-7). Before glory arrives, however, believers must suffer—suffering is the pathway to glory. Saying that the suffering will last a short time does not necessarily mean short in duration on this earth. Tom Schreiner suggests that “the short time period refers to the entire interval before eternal glory commences” and that when compared to eternity it will seem as if they only lasted a little while.¹ The Apostle Paul understood this:

2 Corinthians 4:17 – For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

Romans 8:18 – For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

1 Peter 1:6-7 – ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, *even though now for a little while*, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, (WHY?) ⁷ so that the *proof of your faith, being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

“A little while” may also denote the degree of suffering.

1 Cor. 10:13 – God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

2 Peter 2:7-9 – ⁷ If He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men ⁸ (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds), ⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation.

Revelation 2:10 (Smyrna) – Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The contrast, then, between the brevity of human suffering and the eternity of God’s glory is clear. Likewise, for the moment the intensity suffering seems severe, but it is little compared to the glory of eternity.²

3. Promises to intervene in our afflictions (v. 10b)

The remainder of v. 10 grounds our assurance in the “**God of all grace.**” The reason we can have confidence in God and submit to Him is because He is the “**God of all grace**” and because of what He has already accomplished for those who are truly His people. Unfortunately, many today claim to be saved by grace without any concept of what this really means. While I admit that the well of God’s grace is too deep for us to totally drink with our finite minds, nevertheless

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *NAC: 1,2 Peter, Jude*, 245.

² Simon J. Kistemaker, *NTC: 1 Peter*, 205.

the only way for one to truly submit to God in full confidence of who He is is through some enlightened understanding by the Holy Spirit of what this “**grace**” really is. It is not simply memorizing Ephesians 2:8 without it somehow affecting our soul. It is not a promise of health, wealth, and prosperity. It is God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense.

Look what Peter says: “**The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will...**” Here we have the grand scope of God’s saving grace. This calling of God’s grace refers to God’s effective work in bringing a person into a saving relationship with Him. This calling from God’s perspective is past, “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) and from our perspective is past in that it took effect in us personally the moment we came to faith in Christ. It is future as it relates to “**His eternal glory,**” the hope that Peter established in the opening of this letter that is also tied to God’s calling. And it is present and secure because it is “**in Christ.**” Here is our assurance. Here is our confidence. “**In Christ**” means everything for the believer as it pertains to his relationship with God. The only way anything could ever change the relationship of one who is truly a child of God is for “**in Christ**” to change, and that is impossible because of Christ’s finished work. So Peter establishes and emphasizes that God’s saving calling is effectual in all its purposes—in and through and because of Christ. And with this the believer can have confidence that God will complete what He started.

What an encouragement that is for the believer in the midst of suffering. If you will recall, I have mentioned on many occasions that God’s calling or God’s election in Scripture is written as an encouragement to those who are in turmoil. That is exactly what Peter sets forth. And how does Peter say this grace will be worked out in the life of the believer, at all times, but particularly as it relates to suffering?

Perfect – Complete you, literally set right what has gone wrong. It is a promise that God will repair the damage that this suffering has produced.

Philippians 1:6 – *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

God will not allow the work that He has begun in you to fall short of His perfecting grace.

Confirm – The verb means “to fix, to make firm or solid,” and denotes the stabilizing of something by providing a support. It is a promise that in the midst of your suffering, God will give you the needed support to resist temptation, a temptation to submit to the evil one and deny Christ.

Strengthen – Similar to confirm it promises the needed strength to firmly resist the devil, to be firm and hold your ground in the face of the roaring lion. Those who do not fear his roar will not be consumed by his bite.

Luke 22:31-32 – ³¹ Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your *faith may not fail*; and you, when once you have turned again, *strengthen* your brothers.

Establish – Literally, “steadfast.” Unlike confirm, which refers to supports put around, establish refers to a firm foundation.

All loss from suffering will soon be made right, and that for eternity. Sufferings here in this life are but a precursor to eternal glory.

Compare this to Joel Osteen's theology, which proclaims "do what you can and God will pick up your slack?" In Osteen's teaching, Jesus is nothing more than a supporting character in an otherwise pretty decent life. How can *I* get the glory that God has for me *now*? However, your best life now cannot deal with human suffering. Further, it is a blatant distortion of Paul's teaching in **Philippians 2:12-13** – ¹²"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure." God is not merely a means to an end to help us get along fine in this life. It is not about our glory, but His. And if it is something that *I* get or earn, it is no longer grace. Peter says that the God of all grace (who chose you in Christ, redeemed you by his mercy, and called you to repentance and faith by His Spirit) will complete and make you what you ought to be *for His glory!*

Then, just in case we need more encouragement, after emphasizing the power of God's grace, Peter concludes with a doxology—"To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen." While we might get discouraged by the events of this world and our present sufferings, Peter praises God that in spite of it all, "It is my Father's world!" The God who permits suffering in His children and even allows Satan to reap destruction is the sovereign ruler of all things and the God who cares (5:7). Everything was, is, and forever will be under His "mighty hand" (5:6). Nothing surprises God—He ordains all things that come to pass "**forever and ever. Amen.**"

That should be the believer's attitude. But it will only be his attitude if his heart has truly been changed by this powerful, sovereign God. Then, those who are His children can proclaim along with Paul:

Romans 8:16-18 – ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

III. Concluding thoughts (5:12-14)

1. Personal insights

— **Silvanus (Silas) and John Mark (vv. 12-13)**

— **Babylon (code for Rome) (v. 14)**

— **She (code for the church) (4. 14)**

2. Pastoral exhortations

— **Remember the true grace of God (vv. 10, 12)**

— **Remember love for the brethren (v. 14)**

— **Remember our peace in Christ (v. 14)**