

1 Peter 5:6-14  
Peter's Parting Commands

5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. 13 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 14 Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

In this final section in 1 Peter two great realities stand out:

- 1) The reality of spiritual warfare in the lives of Christians.
- 2) The sovereignty and power of God over the lives of Christians.

Spiritual warfare was a reality in the lives of the people to whom Peter was writing. Most of them in their previous way of life had spent hours in pagan temples worshipping idols, making sacrifices to false gods, and living immoral and ungodly lives.

When they had become Christians and they gave up their idol worship and their immoral behavior, they found themselves rejected by the majority culture. And the culture had responded with persecution against Christians. It seems they became the targets of jokes and abuse and exploitation and even torture. Peter was like an army general giving instructions to the infantry on the front lines of a raging battle. He was exhorting and encouraging and even commanding them to stand firm in the faith – to resist and reject evil.

Peter, you remember is an apostle. He was appointed by Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit to teach the truths of the living God to the people. These truths included not just suggestions, but downright commands. They were not just Peter's ideas, but they were instructions given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so they carried divine authority to the people of that day and to people of all ages, including us. Today I want us to look at these Parting Commands of the Apostle Peter to the churches then, and to us now.

But besides the reality of spiritual warfare, there was another great reality that encompassed the lives of these first-century Christian believers – it was the even greater reality of God’s sovereignty and power over the lives of his people.

Let’s think about the context of our passage today. You remember last week we learned about the ministry of elders, pastors in the churches of Christ. They have a great responsibility to oversee the churches, the flocks of God under their care. They are to teach the people, and the people likewise have the responsibility to receive their teachings and embrace them as they faithfully taught the true Word of God.

Peter concludes his teaching about elders, pastors with the reminder that all God’s people are to be clothed with humility. Verse 5 says, 5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Peter gives a reason, a very good reason, as to why the Christians should clothe themselves with humility – it’s because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Not to be humble puts one on a collision course with God. To be a proud person, a person full of self-glorifying pride, is put oneself in opposition to God – it is to make oneself an enemy of God.

Since it’s such a serious matter to be full of pride and be devoid of humility, Peter begins at verse 6 saying, 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God...He uses the word “therefore,” which is saying the same thing as “because.” So Peter is saying, “Because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,” you had better be humble. If you’re not humble, you’ll be on the short end when it comes to grace. Now we see a pattern emerge in this passage here. Whenever Peter gives a command from God, it is accompanied either by a reason for the command, or a resultant blessing from God.. Note the rest of verse 6, it gives us both a reason and a result from obeying this command. We should humble ourselves under God “so that at the proper time he may exalt you.” Note two things here. First of all, it is at the proper time that God will exalt you and me. It may not be this year or not even in this life, but at the proper time on God’s calendar he will exalt you. He will give you honor and praise, as you humble yourself under his almighty hand.

Now God’s hand is not only almighty but it is kind and compassionate. It is a hand of security. Jesus said, “...no one is able to snatch them [his sheep] out of the Father's hand.” John 10:29. So to be under God’s almighty hand is the best place to be on earth. Even if trials are severe, to be under God’s almighty hand is to be kept secure in his love and purpose.

The prideful and arrogant people will not be exalted by God but the humble will. What does it mean to be humble? It means to recognize how great God is in his eternal majesty and glory and yet to recognize that we are sinful and helpless without God. A humble person exalts and glorifies God; at the same time, he recognizes his own human frailty, weakness

and sin. He knows without the mercy and love of God he would forever remain adrift on the sea of his own sinfulness and ignorance.

So here is this great command – to humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand. It is God’s might and sovereignty that is at the forefront here. God is mighty enough to take a poor sinner and raise him up to heights of glory he never imagined. There is a song sung by Josh Groban about friendship that captures this idea and we can apply it to God’s friendship with us, his people:

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains  
 You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas  
 I am strong, when I am on your shoulders  
 You raise me up to more than I can be.

This is what God does for us when we humble ourselves under his mighty hand. It is God who raises us up to be more than we can be. This is what God does for us; this is what we should do for one another - raise up our brother or sister so they can be more than they could be otherwise.

In his parting commands to the people in the churches, this is the first one: to humble ourselves under God’s almighty hand that he may exalt us in due time.

The second parting command is in verse 7:

7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

You see, it is because we have humbled ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that we can cast all our anxieties on him. He is well able to take care of all our anxieties. He is will able to take care of every situation that causes us anxiety.

And a reason is given here, a reason we should cast all our anxieties on him. It’s because he cares for us. If you have someone who loves you and has your best interests at heart, maybe it’s a parent or grandparent or spouse or good friend, you can go to them and share with them what you are anxious about, what you are worried about, and they will help you to the best of their ability because they care for you. And God cares for you more than any human can care for you. How do we know he cares for us? It’s because he sent his one and only beloved Son to die for us, to pay for our sins by his sacrifice on the cross, and then to be raised from the dead on the third day.

God has done the most difficult thing for us. To deal with the horribleness of our sins and where it was leading us to – to the harsh judgment of God – to deal with this greatest of all problems that face us – God has done this in sending Jesus Christ to us.

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Rom. 8:32

Now this matter of casting all our anxieties on him is not optional for us. God requires us to do this. It doesn’t matter how great we think the problem is. We have no choice if we’re

obedient to God, and that is to cast that anxiety on him. We have to cast it and leave it, and go about our business, and trust him to take care of the problem.

Now think of people in the world who are not Christians. What are they going to do with their anxieties? They are going to have to suffer from them and do what they can in their own strength and resources. They don't have divine help. They only have what little human help they can manage to muster up.

If you are a Christian today, you have a great God that you can cast all your anxieties on. He is a mighty God and he cares for you. Peter gives this command but he gives us a reason for obeying it and the blessing that comes from obeying it. The Apostle John said in 1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Now Peter gives another Parting Command to the people of God in this passage, in verse 8, 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful.

These actually are two commands, but I'm going to treat them as one. First of all, we need to be sober-minded. In other words, we need to think clearly and rationally. We don't want our thinking to be cloudy and incoherent, the way a drunk person would be inhibited by alcohol. We want to always keep our wits about us.

And secondly we need to always "be watchful." In other words, always be alert, be spiritually alert, not spiritually lazy or sleepy. A person on the front lines of a battle must be alert to all the dangers around him. If he is distracted or not paying attention to what is going on around him, it could be fatal.

For the same reason Peter gives us a reason why we need to be sober-minded and watchful. It's because we are in a spiritual war, a spiritual battle, and there is an enemy out there who is looking and waiting for an opportunity to do us harm. Who is this enemy. Verse 8 goes on to tell us, Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. First of all, Peter doesn't call him "your friend." He calls him "your adversary" – that is, your enemy. He is opposed to you. The devil wants to destroy you if he could, but he can't destroy you because Jesus has saved you. But he can trip you up, he can do what he can to nullify your witness, your testimony, your service to Christ. Have you ever seen a cat stalking a bird. They move verily slowly and quietly, sneaking up on the bird until they can pounce on the unsuspecting creature and kill it. The devil is like a lion on the hunt, seeking to find prey. Seeking to find lazy, sleepy, unalert Christians, that he can pounce on and destroy them if he could.

The devil is a real spiritual being who is loose on the earth. He is doing great damage, especially in the lives of people who are not Christians – taking them "captive to do his will." But for us Christians there is a remedy. It is, in fact, another one of Peter's Parting Commands. It is found at the beginning of verse 9, "Resist him..."

We are not to be afraid of the devil, but we are to resist him. James 4:7 tell us what will happen when we resist the devil: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

You notice that James presents this same strategy, this same mindset, this same way of life. What do we do first? We submit to God. That is the secret. Then when we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

I tell you, you do not need to be afraid of the devil. But you and I do need to resist him. The devil is terrified of Jesus Christ and his name and his power. If the devil or one of his demons ever harasses you, rebuke them in the mighty and holy name of Jesus and they will flee from you. They will scamper away like a scared dog.

When the devil came to Jesus, how did Jesus resist him. He did it by quoting Scripture. He fought the devil with the sword of the Word of God. That's a good model for us. Resist the devil, quote scripture to him, rebuke him – he will flee from you.

When we resist the devil, we must be, as v. 9, says, “firm in your faith.” Don't be weak in faith, but firm and strong in your battle against the devil. And remember as verse 9 goes on to say, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

So you are not alone in the spiritual battles of life, the battles against Satan. Christians throughout the world are involve in this same kind of conflict. Now we need to remember that the context of this suffering that Peter is talking about is a specific suffering that results from our faith in and declaration of Jesus Christ. Many people of Jesus' day hated him and they will hate us and all of God's people. Satan is opposed to us and he will do all he can to dull our witness to Christ.

But suffering for the name of Christ is part of the Christian package. It comes with the territory. But there will be an end to it. We read in v. 10: 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

[Verses 11-14 preached extemporaneously]

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