

A Study of First Peter

Acquiring the Skills to Finish Well (1 Peter 5:6-11)

“Affliction either drives one into the arms of God or severs one from God.”
~ L. Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 359

I. An Introduction

In these final words, the Apostle Peter provides some invaluable reminders to his readers. First, Peter notes the importance of trusting the Lord. Even in the midst of a hostile world, Peter exhorts his readers to walk in humility. The second reminder pertains to the devil. While a believer is to rest in the Lord, a believer is also to resist Satan. While the Lord does not rest, the Devil doesn't either! The final reminder Peter provides to his readers is a call to cling to hope—not a whimsical or wishful thought, but a hope that rests in the very character of God Himself.

II. Instructions for Finishing Well (5:6-11)

A. The Call for Humility (vv. 5-7)

The first exhortation Peter lists in these parting words is the call for humility. In light of suffering and persecution, a believer needs to recognize and accept God's ordained will. One commentator writes, “To submit to God means basically that we are conscious of our humble status as his creatures. We are prepared to do his will, whatever that may be, at the cost of curbing our own sinful and selfish desires” (Marshall, *1 Peter*, 168).

Observe what Peter states concerning this need for humility:

1. *Humility recognizes the sovereignty of God and indicates a willingness to submit to the Lord.*

The phrase “mighty hand of God” often speaks of divine deliverance (e.g., Exod 3:19; 32:11; Deut 5:15; Dan 9:15). The same “hand” that delivered Israel from Egypt and caused the blind to see, is the same “hand” that will care and provide for those who cling to the Lord (see 1 Cor 10:13).

2. *Humility leads to exaltation.*

A common theme in Scripture (see Matt 23:12; Lk 14:11; Jas 1:9), the Lord will exalt those who walk in humility. The “due time” does not refer to this life, but what awaits God's people. As aptly noted by one commentator, “The day of humiliation is limited to this world, but the readers [believers] will be lifted on high by God's grace forever” (Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter and Jude*, 240).

3. *Humility is accomplished by trusting God.*

The term “to cast” is colorful and was used to describe the disciples tossing their coats over a donkey as a saddle for Jesus (Lk 19:35).

Casting our worries on God implies that He cares, and He is able to deliver (see Matt 6:25-34).

How can anxiety and worry be criticized as pride?

B. The Call to Resist the Devil (vv. 8-9)

While believers are to rest in God's goodness, they are also to be alert to Satan's evil. Peter exhorts his readers to be clear-headed and alert—terms frequently associated with the eschaton (see Matt 24:42-43; 1 Thess 5:6). The basis for this alertness is as follows:

1. *The devil is seeking to destroy a Jesus follower.* The term “devour” depicts a beast swallowing its prey in a single gulp (e.g., used of the fish when it swallowed Jonah in Jonah 2:1). While the Lord seeks to comfort and protect, Satan desires to terrorize and destroy.

How is the image of a lion a fitting illustration of Satan?

Peter specifically calls for believers to “resist” the devil by remaining firm in their faith. This phrase “implies a confidence that God will intervene and give the Christian victory, not defeat” (Grudem, *1 Peter*, 204). A beautiful picture of this resistance can be seen in Revelation 12:9-11: “They have conquered [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”

2. *Other believers are also undergoing persecution, and they are persevering.* The “this-isn't-fair” or “you-cannot-relate” card cannot be played. Other believers are also suffering and not buckling under the pressure. Their example strengthens the morale. The whole army of the Lord is engaged in the same battle!

C. The Call to Cling to Hope (vv. 10-11)

v. 10 - Typical of Peter's writings, he utilizes a particular conjunction at the beginning of verse 10 to indicate a distinct contrast between his previous statement. While these believers might be suffering and undergoing attacks from Satan, it is all temporary. However, comfort and hope stems not from the brevity of the suffering, but from the Lord, who is full of grace (e.g., 1:13; 4:10; 5:5). He promises to exalt His people.

Observe what the Lord will specifically do for His children:

- *The Lord will restore.* The Lord will replenish any resource or ability that has been lost in the midst of perseverance.
- *The Lord will confirm.* This term speaks of making them stable in their faith.
- *The Lord will strengthen.* The Lord will also make them strong.
- *The Lord will establish.* Finally, the Lord also promises to “settle” them. This term speaks of security.

These four verbs are so similar that one scholar writes, “It may be hairsplitting to differentiate the senses of the various verbs used in this way. They are piled up rhetorically to emphasize that God will strengthen us in every way to face persecution” (Marshall, *1 Peter*, 172).

v. 11 - Peter concludes with a precise and very concise statement: "The Lord can and will . . . so be it!"

III. Intersect

From job security to potential health concerns, our lives are inundated with issues that can create enormous bouts of anxiety. A character in Scripture which displays just the opposite of what Peter commands is Martha. Based upon Luke 10:38-42 and 1 Peter 5, we need to take note of the following:

- Worry presumes upon the Lord and elevates oneself.
- Worry is not confined to the realm of suffering or persecution. It can raise its ugly head even in the midst of serving the Lord.
- A worry-free life is one that possesses a single focus—a focus that is Christ-centered.

What area in your life often brings a spirit of unrest? Are there any particular concerns that orbit around this area? If so, how does the promises that the Lord will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you bring comfort? Spend some time this week "releasing" control of this area. Draw your attention to the Lord and allow Him to work in and through you.

"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

~Hudson Taylor

For further thought . . .

Based upon our study this morning, you may want to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:

How does a Christian resist the devil? Ephesians 6:10-18 provides us with a field manual on how to be best equipped for spiritual warfare. Read this passage, and note how this passage of Scripture can help you in your efforts to resist temptation. Specifically, note how each item mentioned in Ephesians 6 offers protection from Satan's attacks.