

# 1 Peter Ch5v6-11 - Suffering and Anxiety

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Preacher: Kevin Gabriel

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you. We're delighted to welcome Kevin Gabriel this morning, who is preaching for us this morning. Kevin is serving in the church in Douglas Baptist, and maybe, Kevin, as you come up, you can read the passage, but maybe you can also say a couple of sentences about you, who you are, why you're here, and what you're doing here.

But thanks, Kevin. It's good to have you. Good morning.

If you would open your Bibles with me to 1 Peter 5. So thank you, Alex, for introducing me. Yeah, so my wife, Christine, and I are members of Douglas Baptist Church, so just a few minutes up the road.

We moved here from Canada in January. We have two beautiful children, Owen, who is two and a half, and Ellie, who is a year at the end of this month.

So that's a little bit about us, but we're just delighted to be serving with you all in Ireland and just joining in the work that the Lord is doing here. We're going to be looking this morning at 1 Peter 5.

[ 1 : 18 ] Let's read from verse 6 down to verse 11. Peter writes these words. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray as we come to God's word. Lord, we thank you that you are a speaking God.

[ 2 : 34 ] What grace that you would not leave us on our own to blunder our way through life, trying to figure out how to live and what to do and who we should be.

But you have spoken into this world. And more than that, you have come into this world through your son, Jesus. And Lord, we look to you now for help.

Lord, we are weak and we struggle. We are in need of your help this morning, as we are every day. So Lord, would you help me as I speak? And would you help each of these brothers and sisters who are here as they listen?

Lord, would you encourage us through your word and change us to be more like our Savior, Jesus? Amen. I wonder if you've ever thought before about the connection between suffering and anxiety. Typically, when life is going well, we tend not to be as anxious, do we? There's no unexplained medical concerns.

[ 3 : 39 ] The kids seem to be doing well. Our bank accounts are in good shape. We're holding a solid job. What is there to worry about? But even when life is going well, we can still battle with anxiety, can't we?

And there's many reasons for that, certainly. But at least one of them would be we look at the sufferings of other people and we wonder if they will happen to us. Maybe a friend's child is diagnosed with cancer.

Well, is my child healthy? Or a co-worker loses their job. How steady is my job? We worry about the present sufferings that we endure and about the future sufferings that maybe we will face.

And if we were to try to explain that connection there between suffering and anxiety, we might say that anxiety is the mental response that accompanies suffering.

Anxiety is that acting out of possible futures in our minds. That's how Jesus describes it to us. He says, What shall we eat? Or what shall we wear? Where will we live?

[ 4 : 50 ] When will this end? What will she say? What will I do? How will this turn out? Will he be okay? We're acting out futures in our minds.

And sometimes those anxieties spring up on us like a stubbed toe. Right? They're all consuming. Maybe it's a call from a doctor or from a family member. Other times anxiety is like a throbbing paper cut.

It's subtle, but it's distracting and it just won't go away. Maybe it's financial concerns that we're facing. So I would ask you, take a minute right now, what anxieties are you currently facing? Whatever it is, whenever it happens, we are all tempted to turn to anxiety in the face of suffering. We feel alone, vulnerable, betrayed, abandoned, weak, and weary.

And anxiety is a natural response to that. But as Christians, we know that God wants us to live our lives free from the burdens of anxiety, don't we?

[ 5 : 56 ] We read verses like in Philippians 4 where it says, be anxious for nothing. But maybe when we read a verse like that, instead of helping us, it just pushes us further down the spiral, wondering, why am I struggling so much with anxiety if I'm a Christian?

So friends, how do we deal with our anxieties? When the sufferings of our lives cause us to feel abandoned or alone, and we start acting out those possible futures in our minds, where do we turn? How do we please the Lord in those moments? Well, this question is exactly what Peter is dealing with here in 1 Peter 5. This passage comes at the end of a letter that is written to a group of Christians enduring intense suffering.

And here, Peter is addressing this issue of anxiety and how it relates to suffering. And he's giving instruction on how do we please the Lord? How do we trust the Lord in these kinds of circumstances?

And in short, Peter wants to show us that we can trust the powerful God of grace because he cares for us. And he shows us that in three stages.

[ 7 : 05 ] First, he shows us that there is a God who is above our sufferings. Then he shows us that there is an enemy who is behind our sufferings. And then he shows us that there is a glory that is beyond our sufferings.

Now, before we get into that, I do just want to affirm that mental health struggles like anxiety are complex and multifaceted and anything but simplistic.

And there's many reasons why many of us struggle with anxiety. Physical reasons, emotional reasons, spiritual reasons. So I'm not trying to be simplistic this morning.

What we talk about is not the only word on anxiety or the only way to approach it. And it's not the only way the Bible approaches it. But it is one way that God speaks about it.

And so we want to listen to his voice in this passage. So first, let's look here at the God who is above our sufferings. We see that in verses 6 and 7, the first two verses.

[ 8 : 03 ] And notice that verse 6 begins with therefore, meaning it's connected to the previous section, right? Before this, in the verses above this, Peter gives several instructions to the elders of that church.

And then he reminds the church to be subject to their elders. And then he extends that call to the whole church by calling on them to clothe themselves in humility because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

And with that context in mind, Peter then fleshes out what does it look like to humble yourself before the Lord? How do we do this, particularly in the context of our sufferings?

How do we humble ourselves, put ourselves under a God who brings suffering into our lives? And Peter offers three answers for us in these two verses.

And those answers are three truths about who God is. He says God is mighty. God will lift you up in due time. And God cares for you.

[ 9 : 05 ] Now, before we look at those three answers, I want to just draw a connection between those three things and something that I read in a Jerry Bridges book a few years ago. Jerry Bridges has a really helpful book called Trusting God.

And in that book, he says that there are three things we need to believe if we're going to trust God in the middle of suffering. We need to believe that God is sovereign, that God is wise, and that God is loving.

So think with me about how this works. You need to imagine that if anxiety is a virus, you need three vaccines to counter it. That's what he's saying here.

And to miss out on any one of those vaccines means you won't be able to trust God well. So think about this. If you believe that God is wise and loving, but not sovereign, you'll believe that God has good intentions, but he's kind of wringing his hands helplessly.

He wants to help you, but he doesn't have the power to do so. And so you'll feel like things are spiraling out of control. Okay, well, what about if you believe that God is sovereign and loving, but not wise?

[10:13] Well, you'll believe that God wants to do good to you and has power to do good to you, but really has no idea how to do good to you because he's not wise. And so you'll feel like, God, what are you doing?

Why is my life going this way? Well, what about if you believe that God is sovereign and wise, but not loving? Well, then you'll believe that God is a cold, controlling tyrant.

Maybe he is doing what's good for you, but there's no love in it, and so you'll feel bitterness and doubt. God, why do you even care about me? I wonder, is there any one of those three that you tend to forget more than the others?

Because all of us, I think, lean towards forgetting or overemphasizing one of those at the expense of the others. Now, look at these verses, and notice how Peter draws those three things together as he comforts these believers.

First, he says, humble yourselves under God's mighty hand. There's the sovereignty piece.

Whatever your situation, whatever your suffering is that's provoking your anxiety, we are told to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

[11:26] The situation is in God's control. Now, second, why should we be humble under God's mighty hand? Because he will lift you up in due time.

There's the wisdom piece. Do you see that? The piece of wisdom. God knows the times. He knows the seasons of your life. He, in his wisdom, knows the right time to lift you out of your suffering, to exalt you, whether that is in this life or if it's in the next life.

He also knows the improper time to do that. In his wisdom, he's working the timing out. And then third, the third thing he says is, cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

There's the piece of love, right? God loves you in the midst of your suffering. And the word here that's used for how God cares for you, we can use the word cares almost as a parallel for anxieties, right?

Like the cares of the world are over me. That's not the word that's being used here. He's not saying, you know, God is anxious about you. The word that he uses here for God cares for you is the word that we read in Mark, where they are in the boat, the disciples are in the boat, and there's a storm, and they wake Jesus up, and they say, don't you care that we're perishing?

[12:45] That's the word that's used here. This is, if he says God cares for you, he's saying that God has concern for you. He takes you into account. He loves you.

So do you see how these three things come together like a triple vaccination against anxiety? God's mighty. God will lift you up in due time. God cares for you.

And that then leads Peter to address this question of, okay, so what do I do with my anxiety then? I mean, we might know that those things are true about God, but what do we actually do when anxiety attacks?

And in light of the mighty, wise, caring God, Peter calls us to cast or to throw our anxieties onto him. Peter is calling us to take those anxieties that are weighing us down due to our sufferings and to throw them onto the Lord. Instead of bearing the weight of these things ourselves, we in faith throw them onto his shoulders.

[13:49] Instead, the Lord is in control. The Lord will lift me up. The Lord cares for me. Now, how do you do that practically? Because throwing a burden onto someone else takes conscious effort, doesn't it?

To unburden yourself takes conscious, focused prayer to give these things to the Lord. In Philippians 4, another book in the New Testament here, Paul contrasts be anxious for nothing with, but in everything, pray.

So really, to unburden ourselves, to throw these things onto the Lord means to pray. But beyond that, we need to help each other in this, don't we?

We need to remind each other of these things that are true about God. Help each other to take these burdens off of our backs and put them onto the Lord's back instead. So I would encourage

you, if you are bearing anxiety alone, share it with another Christian who can help you throw it onto the Lord.

Or if you know a Christian who is suffering, then pursue them. Help them. Pray for them. Remind them over and over to cast that onto the Lord. So I ask you, where do you turn when sufferings weigh heavily on you?

[ 15 : 07 ] Maybe there are some sitting here who have given up your belief in God because of the sufferings you've endured. Or maybe you've never experienced much suffering yourself, but as you look at the world around you, you reject any God who would allow this kind of suffering.

But let me ask you, if you turn away from God in your sufferings, do you have somewhere better to turn instead? And if you are turning away from God, are you turning away from this God?

This caring God? Or are you turning away from a God you've created in your own mind? Maybe some of us, when we feel the weight of anxiety and suffering, we turn to something to help numb us, to forget our worries.

Maybe that's drink, or maybe it's something less damaging, like watching a show, or playing a game, or scrolling through social media, or listening to a podcast.

Now, we need to rest. And it's good for us to do things, maybe like this, that we enjoy with people that we love, things that lighten our spirits, and that help us to bring rest to our souls, and take our minds off of heavy things.

[ 16 : 13 ] That's good. But it's not helpful for that to be your ultimate strategy for dealing with sufferings. Because the problem is, the thing with suffering and anxiety is, it's going to be right back tomorrow, when you wake up, or when that TV show ends.

When sufferings can't be ignored, when anxieties pile up and stare us straight in the eyes, we must be learning and helping each other to throw those anxieties to the Lord.

Well, why is that so important? Because in the next two verses, Peter gives us an answer, because we have an enemy who stands behind our sufferings.

Peter reminds us now, in verses 8 and 9, that there's not only a God above our sufferings, but an enemy behind our sufferings. And notice with me that there's two commands he gives at the beginning of verse 8.

He says, Be alert and be sober-minded. Sober-mindedness brings that imagery of drunkenness, doesn't it? To be sober is to have an alert mind, a mind that is not dulled by alcohol, or something like that.

[ 17 : 23 ] It's to possess your own senses, to hear and see and think and make decisions clearly. Alertness, the other command, brings in the imagery of sleep.

We could translate this word here, just be awake. Don't be drifting off to sleep. Notice what's going on around you. We need minds, Peter is saying, that are clear and awake.

Why? Because of your adversary, he says. We go through life, friends, with an adversary who opposes our faith.

And look at how he's described there in verse 8, like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Our enemy's intention is to swallow people up.

Now that's a very familiar verse, probably for many of us. We often quote this in context like maybe sexual sin or addiction or these kind of things. We say, you know, the devil seeks to swallow us up in these ways.

[ 18 : 22 ] And that's true. But what is the specific context here of this verse? Anxiety and suffering, right? That's what we're dealing with here.

Now maybe you've never thought of Satan and associated him with your anxieties. Because without a sovereign God in the picture, our culture views these things that happen to us just as cosmic accidents.

We don't really have control over our sufferings. It's just life in a survival of the fittest world. So when suffering comes and we respond with anxiety, for many of us it just kind of feels natural.

But Peter is reminding us here that we have an adversary out there behind our anxieties who is seeking to devour us through our anxieties. And in verse 9, Peter instructs us how do we respond to him?

We resist him. We oppose him. We stand against him. And he describes that resistance for us in two ways. Peter says to resist Satan we need to have a specific orientation towards God and then we need to know something about the church.

[ 19 : 30 ] Look, the first thing he says there is stand firm in the faith. That's the orientation we need to have towards God. That brings us back to our first point we've been looking at that Satan would desire us to think that God is not in control, that God is not wise, he doesn't know what's best for us and he doesn't care for us.

And faith resists that. But then look at what Peter says next. He says, because you know, what do we need to know in the midst of our suffering?

You know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. Okay, the family of believers here, that of course means the universal church, the church through all of space and time.

And we are to resist Satan, Peter says, by knowing that they are experiencing the same kind of suffering. How does that work? Here's what I think Peter is saying here.

When suffering comes into your life and you begin to give yourself over to anxiety because of it, the devil is seeking to devour you by getting you to feel alone.

[ 20 : 39 ] Right? No one cares for me. No one is with me. No one has experienced anything like this. Where is God in this? I'm all alone. We all feel like that in the midst of our suffering, don't we?

And Peter steps in at this moment and he says, no. What you are experiencing is happening to your brothers and sisters all over the world. Don't listen to Satan. You're not alone in these things.

And friends, there's very relevant application for us here as churches, isn't there? As local churches and as a universal church, as we journey through life together, we must not let others feel alone.

We must not let them feel alone in their sufferings. When we know of trials that other people are enduring, of anxieties that they are facing, we need to stand with them, assuring them that they're not alone in these things.

God has not abandoned them. Think back to the imagery here that Peter is using of a lion. If you've ever watched a nature documentary, who does the lion go for?

[ 21 : 44 ] The strongest bull in the herd? No. Right? The lion goes for the weak, the young, the immature, the vulnerable, the isolated, the struggling.

In other words, all of us at different times in our lives. Right? We need to remember that these types of people at their seasons of their lives will be particular targets for Satan's and we need to remind them that they're not alone in this battle.

So if any of you here are suffering today alone, beginning to maybe feel these things, to give yourselves over to your anxieties, I encourage you, speak with a trusted friend, speak with your elders here at the church.

Your brothers and sisters around the world are experiencing these kinds of things too. A part of life's journey for my wife Christine and I involved a number of miscarriages before our children were born.

And as we began to share about those things with other people, we had multiple couples tell us that they had experienced miscarriages as well but never told anyone. Some of them for decades had never told other people that they had endured that.

[ 22 : 50 ] Friends, don't suffer alone like that. Share these burdens with others so that they can help you to bear them and to remind you to be sober and alert to Satan's devices so they can help you throw those things onto the Lord together.

Now, with all that said, just knowing that other people are experiencing the same kinds of sufferings doesn't really give us ultimate hope, does it? I mean, suffering together is better than suffering alone but it really doesn't sound like much of a final redemption to me to just suffer together.

The question is, is there an end to our suffering and our anxiety? Well, that's what we're going to see here in the third part. We've seen the God above our sufferings, the enemy behind our sufferings, now let's look at the glory beyond our sufferings here in verses 10 and 11.

And the first thing that we need to notice in these verses is that there are no commands. The first two sections were full of commands but in these last two verses, no commands. As Peter turns his focus to glory, he just spills out encouragement and affirmation after one another.

Commands and our obedience, in other words, are not the final word in these things. The God of grace is the final word in our suffering. And this is the way that Peter introduces this section with the God of all grace.

[ 24 : 11 ] We suffer and struggle and sin and we give ourselves over to anxiety again and again but God does not run out of grace to us. Notice how Peter describes the Lord here as the one who has

called you to eternal glory in Christ.

What does God call us to? Eternal glory. Life might be filled with suffering and anxiety now but God's intention for us is to share in eternal glory.

But what is the assurance that we'll receive that glory? I mean, if we look around at our lives today, for many of us, our lives look like anything but glory, don't they? But notice those next two words, in Christ.

We are tempted to look at our surroundings, our circumstances and to doubt that God cares, to doubt that God is wise, to doubt that he is powerful. Suffering abounds, sin abounds in our lives, our circumstances worsen and we wonder where is this care that we are promised in verse 7?

But friends, where do we look to see God's care on full display? In Christ, right? Where do we look to see his wisdom on full display?

[ 25 : 28 ] In Christ. Where do we look to see his power on full display? In Christ. In the trenches of our lives, we need to look to Christ as the ultimate evidence of God's care for us.

We look to Jesus, the suffering Savior who knows our pain, who knows our suffering and defeated it once for all on the cross and now lives to intercede for his people.

We are members of Christ's body and so if God has raised Christ from the dead and brought him to eternal glory, which he has, then he will surely raise us from the dead and bring us to that same eternal glory.

Now notice that Paul contrasts the God of all grace and eternal glory with the reality of suffering in our life being a little while.

You see the contrast? All eternal contrasted with little. Paul wants us to see our suffering in perspective here. Just to illustrate this, I think my son, Owen, who is two, loves playing with little trucks, what little boy doesn't, right?

[ 26 : 36 ] When he was about one, I was taking him for a walk and we came across a real, massive, moving bulldozer. And when I looked down, my son, Owen, was literally shaking in fear at the raw power of this machine that was in front of him just pushing dirt.

I think Peter is taking us and saying, you think this bulldozer is big? So far, it's all you've ever known. You should see a real bulldozer.

You think this suffering is big? So far, it's all you've ever known. But you should see eternal glory. That's what Peter is doing for us here. Friends, our suffering will not last forever.

God is not calling you to trust him eternally with your anxiety and your suffering. You won't need to cast your anxieties forever. It's just for this time, Peter is saying, just for a little while until your faith becomes sight.

This time of faith is coming to an end soon. Remember, faith doesn't carry on into heaven. Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 13. Faith, hope, and love. Only love carries on.

[ 27 : 47 ] Faith ends. Think of the joy of faith no longer being a part of your life. All of God's promises right there in front of you all of the time.

No room for doubts, for questions, for struggling, for wondering, for anxiety. Your faith is sight. That's what's in store for you, Peter says.

And as you journey your way there, Peter reminds us that we're not left to our own devices in this. Look how Peter ends the verse. He says, this God, this God of grace, this God who called you to his eternal glory, he says he will restore you, make you firm, strong, and steadfast.

This, friends, is how God cares for us, even today. Even in the midst of our suffering and anxieties, God promises here that he will mend us, he will support us, he will strengthen us and establish us. So come, God calls to you today, all you who feel broken, he will mend you. Come all who feel shaky, he will support you.

[ 28 : 57 ] Come all who feel weak, he will strengthen you. Come all who feel that your life has no foundation, he will establish you. How do we know that he'll do this?

Look at the end of verse 11. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. That word power is the same word for God's mighty hand.

Back in verse 6, that God under whose powerful mighty hand you humble yourself today, to that God belongs power forever and ever. Nothing will stand against his good purposes to bring you to glory one day.

So friends, today we have seen here in 1 Peter 5 the God above our sufferings, the enemy behind our sufferings, the glory beyond our sufferings. So for those here who may not be Christians this

morning, where do you turn when your suffering and your anxiety pays you a visit? Won't you come to this God who cares for you in our brokenness and our weakness? come to the one who sent his son Jesus into this broken world to die for us and remake us and bring us to his eternal glory.

[ 30 : 12 ] And for those of us who are Christians here this morning, as you face sufferings in life that provoke anxieties in your heart, remember, you can trust the powerful God of grace because he cares for you.

Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for your care. And we pray, Lord, I pray for all of these brothers and sisters, these believers here this morning.

Lord, would you help us, give us the faith to see Christ, the one who cares for us. Help us look to Jesus, the ultimate evidence that you love us, that you care for us, that you will establish and strengthen us until the day when our faith will be sight.

And we will dwell with you in eternal glory. Lord, help us until that day, we pray. Amen. Thank you, Kevin.