4 More Weird Christian Responses to Suffering

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[0:00] If you take your Bibles or devices and go to 1 Peter or 1 Peter chapter 5, I did something a little different for this morning, next couple weeks.

We were going to finish up 1 Peter this Sunday today, but I decided to wait. I'm going to split it into two different parts.

So next week we'll do 12 through 14, but then there's really a key part in verse 12, excuse me, where Peter says, this is the true grace of God, stand firm in it.

So we're really going to look at 1 Peter as a whole and see how Peter shows us to stand firm in this grace. So I thought that would be a good way to end the book.

And then hopefully by the next week, which will be the 12th, I think, we'll start in the book of Exodus. That's kind of the goal. So today, if you're visiting with us, sorry, that black Bible in the chair in front of you, you go to page 182.

You'll find 1 Peter 5, 6 through 11. That's what we're going to study today, 6 through 11 of chapter 5. I'll read the passage and we'll do our study.

Therefore, be humble under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you.

Be sober. Be alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

And after you've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, establish you.

To him the power forever. Amen. I probably had related to you the story about my father-in-law some time ago.

[2:28] I think Chris was probably in elementary school, maybe junior high. He was working for a company and his boss, immediate boss, had gone on vacation.

And so the president of the company that he was working told him he needed to sign a service agreement telling a customer that they sold them a new product.

When in fact, it was actually a refurbished product. My father-in-law said, well, I can't sign this because it's not new, it's refurbished.

And the president said, I know it's refurbished, but I want you to sign that it was new. He says, well, I don't think I can do that. And the president said, why don't you go home and think about it?

So he came back the next day and he had thought at that point that he was going to lose his job if he said I'm not going to sign it. And so, sure enough, the president came to him and he told him, I will not sign that.

And the president showed him the door. He lost his job. As a matter of fact, the president of that company was giving him a bad reference to the different companies he was applying.

So he was out of work for almost nine months. And then what he did, he, I think someone from a company he applied to said, do you know that you have this company as a reference?

And they're giving you a bad reference. So at that point, he actually changed it and gave the reference of his immediate boss from that company instead of the actual company. And the immediate boss gave my father-in-law a good review.

And then he ended up getting a job, I think it was that point, started working at Quantum, I think maybe. But I'm not sure. So take another scenario.

She spends about 22 to 23 hours a day in bed. Her sensitivities to chemicals makes it impossible to meet in her room with other people.

[4:41] When she sits up, she eats quickly. One to two times a day only. Seldom more. Seldom more will she sit up.

She never knows when she can sit up. She doesn't want her spine to break again. But it hasn't wiped the smile off her face or killed the joy in her heart.

The two things she's requested of the Lord as she passes to the real world was her words. Talking about Ann Bartsch.

Suffering. We come to the subject once again. Suffering. Suffering. Whether it's specifically for the gospel. Or a set of circumstances that may bring you pain, ill health, whichever.

Suffering is just hard. A couple weeks ago we looked at responding to suffering. And weeks before that in 1 Peter he's brought up suffering.

[5:49] And we've looked at how to respond to that. Well, he brings it up again here towards the end of his letter. His first letter. And we looked at weird responses that we're going to have.

Because when the world looks at the responses we have to things like suffering, they think you're crazy. Because nobody wants to suffer.

They want the suffering to go away. You're not supposed to suffer. Things are supposed to be just peachy keen and just great for your life.

Well, that's not necessarily how God works. So as we come to almost to the end of 1 Peter, by God's grace, be wise, winsome weirdos in this wicked world.

Here's four more weird Christian responses to suffering. We're going to give you four more. Four more weird Christian responses to suffering.

[6:54] I'll put it in a statement for you. Four more weird Christian responses to suffering. When push comes to shove and we suffer, God calls us to be humbled by what He's doing, alert to our enemy and resisting Him, and trusting God that He's working out His perfect plan.

And yet when we suffer, it's easy for the response to be anger. It's easy to get angry with God when things don't turn out the way we want them to.

I didn't want that to happen with that interview. I didn't want that to happen with that job, with that relationship. We end up suffering in harsh ways, so then we get mad at God.

What's happening? Why do we respond this way to God and anger? It's because we believe God owes us. He owes us something better than the providential hardships we face.

That's what we think. Especially what's ingrained and implanted within our American culture. That's very much the case. We could even say Western civilization, but I'll be more specific.

[8:20] Our American culture is very much in tune with the fact that God owes me. God should have.

God, you should have overlooked this. God, you should have not given this to me. God, you should have done this for me after all I've done for you. Right?

Well, in opposition to pop psychology today, and even to what's called Christian counseling, not biblical counseling, I'm talking about Christian counseling, or Christian psychiatry, Christian psychology, which is an oxymoron, anger against God is always sinful and wrong because we sit in judgment of God and accuse Him of evil, even of stupidity.

God, you're an idiot. Why would you even let that happen? That's blasphemy. What's the solution of sinful anger at God, especially when we suffer, especially because we're suffering?

One man puts it like this. It, quote, lies in continually repenting of our remaining unbelief and rebellion. We must reject the lies that deny God's goodness, power, and wisdom.

[9:50] And we must reaffirm His righteousness, love, and justice. And that's what Peter's going to direct us to. He's going to direct us to God's power, and God's goodness, and God's grace.

He directs us right to that. And not just God of grace, but the God of all grace. Okay, well, how do we practically do this then?

What does God command us amid our suffering, and why? How can we respond? How do we respond to suffering and not get angry at God when we're suffering?

Well, Peter tells us. As I said, here are four weird ways to respond to suffering. Here's the first way. Be humbled under God.

Be humbled under God, verses 6 to 7. Therefore, be humbled under the mighty hand of God. Therefore, accept, or even embrace, the situation God has placed you.

[11:06] Where has God placed you today? Where will God place you in the future? Whether you're just a member, a young person, you're in leadership, whatever, God will purge His people.

That's what He's going to do. So let us embrace His plan, being humbled under His plan.

Now remember, Peter is directly speaking about persecution. That's the direct application. Persecution for the faith.

But this also applies to not just persecution, that type of suffering, but also pain. It's not just cruelty that you get for being a Christian, but if you get diagnosed with cancer, ill health, a set of circumstances that you, I didn't plan for this.

Any type of suffering. This applies to it. Be humbled under God. Another way to put it, God calls us to bow to His wisdom.

[12:17] That's what it means. You bow under. You're brought low. He calls us to bow to His wisdom, His plan, twist turns and all, His providence, His purposes, His direction.

It means we put our confidence in God alone. Not in people. Not in our circumstances. And He says, be humbled under the mighty hand of God.

The powerful hand of God. Don't doubt His power. Don't doubt His goodness and His wisdom. Yes, His hand brings judgment, true, but it brings deliverance.

It brings purging. It brings growth in us. God is at work in our suffering, so submit to Him.

Be brought low. You think about God's mighty hand. In the Old Testament, it speaks about God delivered Israel with a mighty right arm, with a strong right arm.

[13:30] God can deliver you in your time of suffering, but what He wants you to do first is be humbled under that. Be humbled under what He's doing. Be humbled under what He's doing. Notice the purpose.

Be humbled under the mighty hand of God. The purpose that He may exalt you at the proper time. It's when we humble ourselves under God, He will exalt us at the proper time.

Sometimes we're exalted in this life. But in all cases, He will exalt us by having us share in Christ's glory at His return.

I guarantee that to you. What's the purpose of His humbling? The purpose of humbling is God's exaltation.

God exalting you. If we come to the place where we embrace God's providential chastisement and testing of our faith, we'll see that He will, when it's all said and done, vindicate and reward us.

He's ending things in the same way He started. Chapter 1, verse 6 and 7. And this you greatly rejoice, even though now, for a little while, since it is necessary, you've been distressed by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, gold which is perishing, even though this faith is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And that praise, glory, and honor, it's not talking about the praise, glory, and honor that's due to God, which is true, but it's the praise, honor, and glory as given to you. You're honored.

You're exalted because you've humbled yourself under God's mighty hand. That's what Peter's saying. Well, you may ask, though, why?

Why continue under this hardship? What's the motivation? A common theme in Scripture is humiliation, which leads to exaltation.

It culminates in the death of the Son of God. It's all the way from the very beginning of the Bible from Genesis, all the way to the time when Messiah comes.

You see this theme. Humiliation, exaltation. Humiliation, exaltation. And you see the prophecy that Messiah will be humbled and yet he'll be exalted.

Look, if the Father had his Son, the Lord Jesus, killed, then exalted, won't he also exalt you, Christian?

He will. It's a guarantee. 110% guarantee. That's what God will do. This is the essence of the Gospel.

Jesus did this. He took on human flesh. He humbled himself by taking on human flesh. lived perfectly, was crucified in the place of sinners, paid for the penalty of sin, broke the power of sin, and will one day deal with the presence of sin in our life.

Satan is conquered. Death is conquered. Sin is conquered. Hell is conquered. He did that for all those who repent and put their trust in Jesus alone.

that's the Gospel. You repent, you humble yourself, and God exalts you. Are you here and you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you here and you have not repented and put your trust in Jesus?

Turn and repent. Turn, come to Jesus. He will save you. But mind you, if you come to Jesus, all your problems won't go away.

As a matter of fact, it might get harder for you. I just said that to some person this past week. Struggling. And I told the person, I said, you know what, all these hardships and the suffering that's coming into your life because God's trying to get your attention.

Where are you at with Him? Where are you at with Christ? I encouraged the person, I said, repent, turn away from your sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ. God's trying to get a hold of you.

And yet I told the person, I said, mind you, it might make your life a whole lot harder. The struggles don't go away.

[18:32] Sometimes it increases. Why? Because God takes that faith and He wants to make it stronger. He wants to grow that faith. So He does this, the purpose, to exalt us.

So be humbled under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time. Then notice what He says. This is how you humble yourself.

Verse 7, casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you. How do you do it? By casting your anxiety on Him. The way we humble ourselves under God is by casting our anxieties upon Him.

Throw it upon Him. We don't take matters into our own hands. But we trust God and His plan. What causes anxiety in your life?

Worries, concerns, nervousness, uneasiness in your life, Christian? The attitude God wants us to have is entrusting ourselves and our troubles, difficulties, and sorrows into His hands.

[19:51] Are you trusting in God's power to care for you? Put anxiety in His hands and leave them in His hands. What are your worries today?

What are your anxieties today? Is it the political atmosphere? Some are happy about the politics now. Others, cringe in fear.

The economy? A job-related problem. Not having a job. A personal relationship. Look, we do all that we can do taking the responsibility God has given to us.

Stewardship, right? We talked about that this morning in the first hour. Stewardship, we've got to be a good steward. But then we cast it upon the Lord. And notice the rationale. Notice what He says.

Because He cares for you. Casting all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you. He cares. It's a concern to Him.

[20:56] It's of concern to God. God doesn't need you. Do you hear that? Let's say it together.

God doesn't need me. God doesn't need me. He doesn't need you. And yet He cares. He shows compassion for you, Christian.

What are your concerns today, Christian? What are your pains? What are His purgings? What are your griefs?

when the pressure gets poured on us, our response should not be anxiety. Instead, we should have a trusting commitment to God. God is sufficient.

And so is His Word. Do we trust His Word? Do you trust Him to be faithful to His promises? Do you trust He truly does care for you? Do you trust Him?

[22:00] Okay? But how do you deal with doubts, fears, questions? We learn how to complain in faith, or one writer puts it like this, holy lamenting to God.

You want to find where the holy lamenting is in the Bible? It's there. You know where it's at? The book of Psalms. We read one just today, Psalm 13.

That's a holy lamenting. God concerns Himself with your situation. He doesn't need you, but you need Him.

And He concerns Himself with your situation, that relationship, that political turmoil, that job, that economic status, that ill health, that persecution. And He gives us the help we need.

He won't necessarily take it away from you. He won't. He'll do even better than that. And that's verse 11. We'll come to verse 11 in a moment. So we don't move from God.

[23:07] We move toward God in faith and humble ourselves before Him. Not venting. Pop psychology says, you know, when you're angry at God, just vent in Him.

Just start foul filth, foul, foul filth. You know, that's just sin. Not to mention it's just stupid. Don't lose control.

Don't vent at God. No, we lament in holiness. Be humbled, be humbled under God's mighty hand.

That's the first weird response. People won't do that. Second one, be alert to the devil. Verse 8, be sober, be alert, your adversary, the devil.

So the second response is be alert to the devil. Be alert to the evil one. Another way to put it, watchful, of vigilance. Casting our cares doesn't mean we're lethargic.

[24:15] It doesn't mean you start sleeping. You can sleep for a sermon, but don't sleep in your life. avoid the effects of being intoxicated and cast off sleepiness and sluggishness.

You might say, well, I'm not intoxicated. I don't drink. Okay, fine. But what's dominating you? What's controlling you? That's intoxication.

Something else is controlling you. Something else is overtaking you. cast off the sleepiness.

We need to be spiritually alert. Focus our attention. You know, when you're driving and you pick up your coffee, things just aren't clicking in the morning.

It's like the spark plug just ain't firing. But you drink that coffee and that caffeine kicks in, you're like, bam, hello, yeah. Right?

Yeah. I'm going to get you all coffee, you know, in the middle of the sermon. Get you all coffee and be like, yeah, amen. I'd be like, whoa, take it down, put some decaf in that coffee.

You people are too excited now. But that's what happens. You get excited, you're like, hey, everything. Voltaire, I think he used to drink like nine, ten cups of coffee a day.

And he would get on, just start writing and stuff like that. That's weird, and I think he lived like 92 years old too, which is amazing. And they tell you caffeine's bad for you, that's a lie.

No, don't listen to me, I'm just kidding. No, but seriously, that's what happens. But that's the idea that Peter wants to get in your head. You're like, bam, you're like, alert, you're attentive. We need a sense of urgency because the devil is looking for someone to devour, we're going to unpack this in a second, to destroy.

He wants to apostatize you. I made up that word, that's cool. That tempter, that serpent of old, he's a liar, he's a murderer, he tells you God is holding out on you.

[26:39] Adversary means an opponent at law. And that's very true because you know what he does to the Father? He comes and he accuses, look at this, Daniel, look at, look at, and he points, why do you even waste your time with him?

He accuses you before the Father. He's our enemy. He slanders you. He slanders and abuses us.

Listen, any thoughts that come into our heads whereby we're slandered, abused, or accused comes from him, not from God. That doesn't come from God.

I have a friend who deals with schizophrenia and he's told me, he'll hear voices that are telling him to kill himself. And when I told him, I said, that's not from God. that's not from God.

Be alert to the devil. Notice why? Because he prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. His goal is to destroy us, apostatize you, you become apostate, you deny the faith, in other words.

[28:00] that we would give into our fleshly desires, chapter 2, 11 to 12, or respond wrongly to our suffering situations. We don't humble under God's mighty hand.

With this enemy, we need to be clear-headed from confusion or passion. Be like a soldier. Soldiers are ready.

They're alert. They're attentive. They're looking around. That's what we need to be. Because he wants to drink or gulp us down.

He wants to abolish us. Anything you can use to get us off track is what he'll do. Do I have that up there? I thought I did.

Yeah. Anything you can use to get us off track is what he'll do. If anything, he'll try to get you to deny the faith, to be angry at God. That's his goal.

[29:07] Just to get you off track a little bit, he'll be like, mission accomplished. Awesome. Gotcha. Be alert to the devil and then notice what he says in verse 9.

Be resisting the devil. resist him or oppose him. How? How do you do it? By being firm. And I think the New American Standard says you're firm in your faith.

No, no. Literally, it's firm in the faith. It's articular in the Greek. Firm or solid or steadfast in the faith.

Being steadfast in the faith is the way that we resist the evil one. The way we oppose the evil one. It's not your subjective faith but it's the objective faith.

The whole truth of Christianity. All that Christianity entails the humiliation exaltation principle. The fact that Christ humbled himself. The fact that the penalty of sin has been broken or has been paid for.

[30:16] The power of sin has been broken. All that the truth of Christ and Christianity all that it entails you're firm in that. You remind yourself of the truth of the cross.

Of God's goodness. His wisdom. His compassion. His mercy. Shown ultimately at the cross. Friends, we don't put strength into believing as one writes or writer puts it.

On the contrary. We draw strength from the factual truth we believe. It's true whether you believe it or not. So we draw strength from the factual truth of the gospel word of who God is and his goodness and grace.

And how he's open to sinners. And he's working in you and in me and us to change us to who he wants us to be. Remind yourself of that.

Notice what he says here. Next part of verse 9. The reason why we should be resisting a devil knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

[31:38] Why? Because we know be encouraged that the same kinds of sufferings are being accomplished by other believers. Peter's saying that fellow brethren throughout the world may not be facing the exact parallel suffering as you but they are truly suffering some for the faith.

Some are facing pain beyond compare that you could not even imagine. Have you ever imagined that there is a Christian there in the Middle East because she's standing firm in the gospel she's been raped for the past month?

Have you thought about that? Have you thought about the fact of a young girl who's been sold into slavery by her parents because she's committed herself to Jesus Christ?

Have you thought about that? And yet I gripe about the state of our American culture and I whine because of the person who's in office.

Friends, that ought not to be. God help us. God help me. You know this tells us something when he says this here.

[33:26] It tells us something when he says this here in verse 9. It tells us that the sufferings we're facing they're penultimately not ultimately penultimately from the evil one.

Which is why we should resist him by being firm in the faith. You might say what do you mean? Job. The accuser comes and accuses Job.

Because you give him everything. Take the stuff away and he'll curse you to your face. Blasphemy.

Slandering. Abusing Job. So penultimately it came from the evil one. Ultimately it comes from God. God says Job is going to be firm in faith.

And he was. He stood firm in faith. Now his friends, who knows when they go to that. Whether we're talking about cruelty or cancer, it's not unique to you or me.

[34:36] The evil one comes against us with these struggles. And you know what? It encourages us because we can relate, there's one of you in here that are dealing with school.

Maybe another person here has been raped. Maybe another person is dealing with ill health. Another person here has a struggle in a relationship. Maybe you've been abused.

Yet another is facing persecution for their faith. Someone else dealing with major temptation in their life. friends, this sense of solidarity gives us even more encouragement to oppose the evil one.

Our suffering is not alone. Our brotherhood is what he calls it. Our brotherhood also suffer. They face these things too.

We're in this together. You might not be struggling the way I'm struggling. I might not be struggling the way you're struggling. But come on, let's not do the cop out of you don't understand what it's like to come on.

[35:48] So I have to experience everything that you've experienced in order to relate to you and vice versa? Well that's no fair. Because who is ever going to do that?

Only Jesus has done that. That's what he's trying to say. Look, we all have our struggles. Let this bring encouragement. We're all facing suffering.

Because God's doing work in us. So be humble under God's mighty hand. Be alert to the devil. Be resisting the devil. And then number four.

We take this from verses 10 and 11. Be trusting in God. Be trusting in God. After you've suffered briefly, notice he says the reason why we trust God.

Why? Because he's the source of all grace. The God of all grace. Which is a synonym for salvation. Grace, which is also the strength to be able to stand firm.

[36:55] we can trust God is doing what he's doing. We can trust him. Be trusting in God because he's the source of all grace.

God with this undeserved favor gives us all the help we need for any and every situation and occasion. He is faithful.

He's faithful. faithful. Be trusting in God. Why? He's the source of all grace and because why else? God has called you in Christ.

The God of all grace who's called you to his eternal glory in Christ. You're united to Christ. We are united to Christ. The basis of God's grace to us and our firm stand against the evil one is our unification with Jesus.

God has not rejected you. You may feel like that. I feel like God's far away.

You ever said that? But he said in chapter 2 verse 9 and 10 you're a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

He's called you out of darkness into light. Your identity is in Christ Christian. We have our identity in our crucified and risen Lord.

Lord. So the God of all grace who has called you in Christ notice to his eternal glory which we know he's talking about the second coming of Jesus.

Interesting here too. Notice he says the first part of verse 10 after you suffered briefly and then he says God's called you to his eternal glory.

Notice the contrast brief suffering eternal glory brief suffering eternal glory and brief suffering eternal glory suffering in this life is just brief or a little while it may seem or feel like an eternity but it's brief suffering is not eternal God's glory is eternal Trump is not eternal God's glory is eternal Vladimir Putin is not eternal God's glory is eternal they will come and go but his kingdom will endure forever whether you're talking about Obama or Trump or anybody else for that matter it's his eternal glory okay trust

God to do what so we know why God of all grace he's called us in Christ there's eternal glory suffering is brief okay trust God to do what what will God do what gives us sure confidence God who is the ultimate reason why we're suffering he's doing something in us what's he doing what's what's what task is he trying to accomplish in us he gives four verbs notice he says God himself is doing this will himself perfect confirm strengthen establish you the first word perfect actually means restore or to put in order second he says confirm which actually means strengthen or to support or make firm third word strengthen means to make strong and fourth a verb to establish or to set firmly or to place on a firm foundation this is what

God's doing in us this is what he's doing in you this is why we're suffering this is why we can trust God this is what we can trust God to do this is God's promise to us amid our sufferings whether it's cruelty or cancer whether it's persecution or pain now know this God is not saying these things God's not saying we're never going to suffer that's not going to happen we will suffer he's not saying that sickness in this life will end and then we'll never be sick again he's not saying that hostility in this life will end and then you'll never face any type of hostility again he's not saying that suffering will always be in this life from birth to death it's not necessarily the case what's he saying there is a time for suffering and it's according to

God's will for us his will for me will be different from his will for you what we do know and can be confident of is that suffering is short in this life this life compared to eternity it's short the end is near vindication awaits us in the eternal state friends God wants us to have an eternal perspective when it comes to suffering it's the only way we're going to be able to get through that we must see the bigger picture God is truly purposing all things for his good and our good we know God works all things together for good to those who love him to those who are called according to his purpose purposing all things for his good and our good in our suffering

God wants our faith to mature to be tried and tested to be riper and sweeter through the hardship the fire of hardship and suffering that's what he wants verse 11 how's he going to do it by his power notice verse 6 or excuse me our passage starting in chapter 5 verse 6 kind of ends the same way verse 11 ends the same way we started so you have power or his mighty hand in verse 6 and he talks about power in verse 11 to him be the dominion literally the power forever amen he gives God the praise because he has the power or the might to accomplish what he's going to do this gives us even more encouragement because it emphasizes

God's power to achieve his purposes in our struggles he's the God of all grace he's the God of all power he's going to do it God has called us he will work in us and he's powerful enough to accomplish it he planned it he promised it he has the power to do it his power enables us not only to trust him but to resist the evil one to overcome temptation and embrace our suffering embrace what he's given to us you may be suffering today you may not be you may maybe you're coming off a time of suffering you're free I can breathe again right maybe that's happening to you but take these four principles whether you're coming off of suffering or you're in a suffering or maybe you're about to suffer I don't know but take these four principles take them to heart in a book

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I'm reading by Mr. Jones gives a good holy lamenting type of prayer I'll close with this quote father it is precisely because I know that you are all loving and all powerful that I'm struggling with the seeming absence of your love and power right now in this time of suffering it is because I am convinced that you are good that your chastisements confuse me it is because I believe in your covenant love that your apparent distance baffles me end quote God help us to remember your goodness to remember your grace to us in the

Lord Jesus Christ the ultimate way you show your love and your grace is in the gospel remind us of your gospel word that you are the God of all grace and so gracious to us calling us in Christ let us humble let us be humble under your mighty hand to be alert to the evil one resisting him and to trust you to trust you take a few moments if you would and ponder what we've seen in God's word think through it let it mull around in your brain in your head in your mind and after a few moments of silence as we do each week after a few moments of silence we'll do our worship and our giving we'll sing our last two songs our closing prayer but this time sit think ponder love die die who

Maggie happy and stop here and see let's go