

Faithfulness in Suffering

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[0 : 00] If you'll open your word, the word to 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 8 through 14.!

What Peter writes to these churches, you will remember these churches are in that area of Asia.

And he writes to them, Be sober-minded, be watchful.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his own eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Basilevanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.

[1 : 26] Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Let's pray. Father, we come to you and we thank you for your word.

We know that you have given to us by your spirit a perfect treasure of your thoughts. I pray that you would help us to reorient our lives by your word, that you would help us to reorganize our lives by your word.

And Father, we would hold it in such high esteem that to know your word is to know your thoughts. And to know your thoughts is to know you.

And so I pray, Father, that you would help us come to know you today. Teach us what we need to live. And we pray this in Christ's name.

[2 : 29] Amen. Now we have to go back and just remind ourselves why we're in 1 Peter. What is going on in 1 Peter? Why did Peter write this letter to these churches?

He wrote this letter to these churches because he wanted them to understand the true grace of God and for them to stand firm in it. And over and over again, he is warning them of the persecution that is to come, the persecution that had already begun for some of them, a persecution in which it's not that one-to-one sort of ratio where someone walks up to you and says, stop believing in Jesus.

You say no, therefore they persecute you. But it's the kind of persecution that comes about because when we trust in Christ, when we follow Christ, our lives are radically changed and different from the world around us.

So there are things that we cannot participate in. There are things that we don't do the way the world does. We don't handle suffering the way the world handles suffering. We don't handle grief the way the world handles grief.

We don't handle our money the way the world handles its money. And because of these things, we come into conflict with the world and that gives them opportunity to, at bare minimum, laugh at us, scoff at us.

[3 : 55] And in some cases, because they refuse to give a pinch of incense to Caesar, cause them to lose their lives. And so he's writing in one of the most desperate circumstances where because as a Christian you refuse to give honor to Caesar by giving a pinch of incense upon the altar, and he's telling them, here's the true grace of God, stand firm in it.

The Christian life can live under the most bleak situations and circumstances in life. The Christian doctrine, the Christian way of life, the Christian theology, who God is, the triune God, all of these things can hold up underneath the worst places in life.

And so I want you to think about that as we think here at this end, what Peter is kind of ending with is that call to faithfulness. Stand firm in it.

Be faithful to the Lord as you go through the suffering that you go through. And I think he gives us three things that if we can understand these three things, it will help us as we face our own suffering.

The first thing is to resist the devil, to resist the devil. You see that in verse 8 and first half of verse 9, where he tells them to be sober-minded and watchful, that your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[5 : 24] Resist him, firm in the faith. And I'll pause there because that's where that part ends. I want you to notice the commands that he gives. He gives these two commands at the beginning, sober-minded and watchful.

And you have to think about this from an internal perspective and an external perspective. In other words, for you to live the Christian life properly, you need to have a watchful eye to the internal part of who you are, where your thoughts are, where your affections are, how you're thinking, how you're feeling, how the things of this world impact you, what's going on in your heart, what are your cravings, what are your desires, what are the things that thrill you.

That's being sober-minded, taking a look at your own heart. As the Proverbs say, it's keeping the heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

But he gives the other word, and the other word is this idea of watchful towards external things, looking at the influences around you, looking at those that you partner with in life, looking at people who you would say are your friends, are they influencing towards good?

Are there things of this world that you're taking in that are dulling your senses to who God is and what he's done? Are there temptations that you're experiencing from the world that seduce you to walk away from your faith or to not be as diligent in your walk with the Lord?

[6 : 46] So he's saying, listen, you've got to look at the internal and the external. Why? Because you have an enemy. Peter introduces this enemy.

He calls him an adversary. He wants us to be watchful and sober-minded because there is a real enemy called the devil.

Now he calls him the devil because the word devil means slanderer. Slanderer. And the best way to sort of understand what this means and who this person is is to understand the Old Testament story of Job.

In the story of Job, God is meeting with the divine counsel. That is, the angels that he has created, that he has given charge over various things, and he meets with them, and Satan comes to be among them.

And in this meeting, God asks Satan where he's been, and he says, I've been to and fro throughout the earth. And God says, well, have you considered my servant Job? Now let me just remind you, Satan doesn't bring up Job's name first.

[7 : 55] God does. Yeah, you need to always remember that. But Satan says, yeah, yeah, yeah, he's faithful. I see it. But look how much you've blessed him.

He's got everything he can want. Of course he's going to be faithful to you. So God says, okay, go ahead, take what he has. And he does. In a day, he loses everything. Livelihood and legacy all at once.

His children, his livestock, everything. There's another meeting of the divine council, and Job, Satan comes back, and talks about Job to God, and says, you know, take his life.

Touch his life. Touch the man. Skin for skin. God says, okay, that's fine. You just can't kill him. So he gives him all of these boils. What the devil is doing in this story is he's being the slanderer.

He's being the accuser. He's being the one who would say, all you got to do is take this from him, and he would fall. He doesn't really love you like you think he loves you. He's not really faithful to you like you think he's faithful to you.

[9 : 03] Of course, our God is all-knowing God. He knows the heart of man. And so this is the enemy that Peter introduces to us. He introduces him to us as this roaring lion then.

He's got this roar because he is seeking to stake out his territory. He's seeking to stake out his dominance and to influence people. So he becomes this plangent prowler who's growling and roaring and trying to get people to be intimidated by him because he wants to do something to draw them away from God.

And as Peter's saying this, and you try to say, well, where's Peter getting sort of these ideas? I think he's thinking about this from two perspectives. I think he's thinking about it because of what he sees in the Colosseum.

And he sees the lions, and he sees how these lions are destroying people. But I also think that in the back of Peter's mind, he hears the words of Jesus from Luke chapter 22 that says, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

Peter denied Jesus three times. It was a direct temptation and assault from Satan himself upon Peter. And Peter fell for the attack.

[10:29] And he denied the Lord three times. And so as Peter is writing to these churches, he's writing from an autobiographical way saying, listen, the devil is real, and he is seeking to devour you.

But Peter doesn't stop there. He says there is the end goal here, and that is that this enemy needs to be resisted. He needs to be resisted. And here's what's interesting.

The ESV from which I am reading says, resist him firm in your faith. Now, I love the ESV translation. I really do. There's so much about it that is just so good, so wonderful to preach from.

But I just have to say, I don't like this translation here. Because every now and then, we get a word that gets thrown in there that's just not there, and the word your faith is not there.

It's the word the faith. And you need to understand something here, because when you read the scriptures, oftentimes we don't read with this lens in mind, but many times there's this idea of your faith, which is subjective, and your faith is what you feel.

[11:45] It's your faith in Christ. It's your trust in Christ. It's your reliance upon God. It's subjective. You feel it. It's internal. It's yours. But also in scripture, there's many times that it's the faith.

And the faith is objective and true, regardless of how you feel about it. It would be akin to the old thought of, well, you know, she's marrying somebody from the Church of Christ faith.

Or they're getting together, but he's the Baptist faith, and she's the other faith. What they're referring to is a set of beliefs, a certain doctrine, a theology, that identifies them in terms of where they stand.

And I know a lot of people think to themselves, you know, well, doctrine's a terrible thing. Listen, doctrine is nothing more than understanding who God is and how he's made this world, what he's doing in this world.

And so, so what you have then is you have this objective thing that's true, whether we believe it or not. We have this subjective thing over here. What Peter's writing about here is that we're to resist the devil firm in the faith.

[12:54] Firm in the faith, not your faith. This is not about you resist the devil by sort of somehow, you know, psyching up your faith and getting it ready for action. No, you resist the devil by coming to believe wholeheartedly that which is true.

because in suffering, when Satan brings his devouring roar to you, what he's after is not to tempt you to believe that baptism is not by immersion.

Hello? Right? Do you hear me? When you're in suffering and he comes to tempt you, he's not trying to tempt you that you ought to worship on the Sunday or Saturday.

He's not trying to tempt you that you, you know, you can baptize babies or not baptize babies. He's coming to tempt you that God is not good. That God is not powerful.

That God is not strong. That God doesn't care about you. That's what he's trying to tempt you to believe. And so you've got to resist him by believing, by being firm in the faith.

[13:58] You know that God is good and you believe it. You know that God is powerful and you believe it. You know that God cares for you and you believe it. The only way for you and I to be firm in the faith is to meet God in the Word over and over and over again.

I can't work this up with my own emotional stance. I need to see in the pages of Scripture the faithfulness of God and the goodness of God time and time and time again because it is by the Word that my faith grows.

So, what is some application from this point? I want to give you three things. I'm going to come back to that, what I just said in just a second, just briefly.

But the first thing we need to say is that there's a real enemy. The Christian church has gone through periods of time when the idea of saying that there's a real Satan with a real demonic horde is like fanciful and nobody believes this and then there's times where everything is about this.

There's a balance. There is a real Satan. He is a fallen angel. Think about that. He's a fallen angel which means he's not all-knowing. He's not all-powerful. He's not all-present. He is created. [15 : 21] So, he's finite in the sense that he is limited by space and time. He is a dog on a leash but he is a vicious dog.

As a matter of fact, so vicious that even other angels will not directly assault him. Listen to Jude, little epistle, verse 9, that when the archangel Michael contended with the devil was disputing about the body of Moses.

I have no idea what that is. You don't either. It doesn't matter. But there's a dispute. Listen to how Michael treats the devil. He did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment but said, the Lord rebuke you.

He didn't come in his own name against Satan but he turned Satan over to the Lord. But you have to understand this enemy is defeated.

This is a defeated enemy. The enemy that walks around roaring like a lion, right, is defeated. Listen to Hebrews, chapter 2, says, since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself, that's Jesus Christ, likewise partook of the same things, flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

[16 : 37] He's destroyed the devil. Why? To deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. The reason we're afraid of death is because Satan wants us to be afraid of death. But as a Christian, you ought not be afraid of your death.

How does he destroy him? You can look in 1 John, chapter 3, verse 8. Whoever makes the practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. And the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Colossians, chapter 2, verse 14, says, And there's a defeat that he has.

Yes. Does he still walk around like a roaring lion? Yes. Both of those are true. Both of those are true. And one, since he is defeated, and there's many things that he cannot do, but the one thing he can do is tempt Christians, challenge Christians to get them to walk away from their faith.

In other words, when suffering comes, he always intends for you to question God. He always intends for you to push back against God.

[18 : 13] He always intends for you to doubt whether or not God really cares about you. Just like Joseph said to his brothers, the brothers meant evil against him, but God meant it for good.

It's the same kind of suffering, but two people mean something different out of that suffering. God intends good for you in the suffering, and the enemy intends bad for you in the suffering.

And the only way to deal with him is to resist him. And the only way to resist him is to believe what is true. To believe what is true.

Resist him firm in the faith. This means you're going to have to study what God's word says about God. And let me just encourage you. This is not about memorizing massive theological terms.

Okay? As pastors, we go to school, we get educated on all the theological terms. The reason they're weird and strange and unusual to most of us is because they used to be in Latin or in German or in Greek, and they've been transliterated into English, so they just sound crazy.

[19 : 30] I mean, if I were to say, let's have a conversation about hypostatic union, I mean, most of you would be going like, hypo-what? Right? Because we don't understand the word, but you don't have to understand the theological jargon.

That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is you read the word and you ask yourself the question, what does this teach me about God? What does this show me about His goodness, His grace?

What does this show me about His power and His faithfulness?

What does this show me about how He cares for me? And you read His word and you go, what does this tell me about man? How does God see man? What does God think about man? You read the word and you ask yourself, how does this show how God works with man?

What God is doing for man? You need to study the word so that you understand who God is, firm in the faith, because that is how you resist Satan.

But the truth of the matter is that there are some of you. you're not a Christian, and it means that you're still on the side of the enemy. Because you see, there's only two kinds of people in the world.

[20 : 38] There are those who have come out of Adam and are in Christ because of faith and what He has done upon the cross, and there are those who are still in Adam. Still, still lost in your sin.

You might think that you're religious and that might be enough, but the truth of the matter is that we've broken God's law, and we deserve eternal damnation because we have broken His law. The only hope we have is that God in His love sent His Son into this world to take the punishment for us. So will you, will you finally and fully turn from trying to be your own boss, turn from trying to be the self-righteous person who thinks you can do it on your own, and say, I'm a sinner, I deserve nothing but wrath, and I put my hope and trust in Jesus Christ.

We need to resist the devil. Second thing we need to do is we don't need to isolate. To be faithful in the middle of the suffering, don't isolate.

Now I get this from the last part of verse 9 as well as 12 through 14. because what you have in verse 9 is he says, you know, resist him, the devil, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

[22 : 06] And then when he ends the letter, it's interesting to me that he talks about the greetings from Silvanus by Peter as well as the greetings from she who is at Babylon as well as Mark and then says, greet one another with a kiss of love.

He's bringing together for them the concept that there are other Christians outside of where they are in their moment who care about you. There are other Christians who are going through similar trials and difficulties as you are.

You are not the only one going through this. And so he wants them to be aware that there are other Christians throughout the world. He calls it the brotherhood.

Now that's not just a Baptist term. Some of you will get that joke. Sorry for those of you that didn't. But he calls it the brotherhood.

And Randy, I want you to notice there's no WMU right there. It's just the brotherhood. Okay? That's for you. You know what I'm talking about. Anyway. The brotherhood. This is not just an organization.

[23 : 18] This is what theologians call a mystic union. That because I'm covered in the blood of Christ and my brother or sister halfway around the world is covered in the blood of Christ, we are in a brotherhood together.

We are in such a bond together that we are to be united not only because we are but because of what Christ has done for us. We are to be united and think of one another, long for one another. And he's looking at these Christians who are about to go through persecution telling them you've got brothers and sisters who are going through the same thing. You're not alone. Don't isolate. saint. I know that we have all kinds of organizations and clubs in our world today.

We've got things like the Lions and the Rotary Club and the Masons and the Eastern Star and we've got soccer teams and we've got Little League and we've got the board for the library and we've got this stock show here.

And here's what I'm telling you. Those are great, wonderful, whatever. But listen, if you don't have this unity with the brotherhood, but you feel more unity with your social club, something is desperately wrong.

[24 : 37] And there's either something wrong with your thinking or there's something wrong with the brotherhood. And as an individual Christian, there should be more connection and unity you have with your local church body than any social organization out there.

They're man-made and do not preach the gospel and have never been promised the presence of God. And here's the thing, as a church body, you're not alone.

You are not alone. There are other churches who are absolutely, entirely interested and longing for your good.

That's a good thing to know. people. That's a good thing to know. Other Christians. He talks about she who's at Babylon.

That's another church. Another church sends greetings to all these other churches. When was the last time you thought to yourself about a church that's over in such and such town and you decided to send them greetings?

[25 : 48] Oh, yeah, I know, we haven't. I tend to be an isolationist, right? I tend to like to be by myself. But as a Christian and as a church, it's not how we should be.

There are churches in this area called, they come together, they call themselves Hill Country Baptist Association. and you're a part of that.

You might not like any of them. They might not like you. But the point is that you've been covered in the blood of Christ and you've agreed to come together and be a body, a greater body, the larger, invisible, universal church together.

Because there's agreement in theology and agreement in doctrine. And so when you look at First Baptist Bandera, First Baptist Tarpley, First Baptist Utopia, First Baptist Curville, First Baptist Fredericksburg, Trinity Baptist, you can think about, you know, First Baptist Bernie, First Baptist Harper, First Baptist Ingram.

There's just a lot of First Baptist churches because we were there first, okay? That's just the way it goes. You're part of a state and a national convention. Now I know that that's staying within denominational lines.

[27 : 03] I know a lot of people go like denominations are bad. No, no, no, no. Denominations are not bad. Denominations help us to understand that we differ so that we can communicate and discuss those differences until we can all get to a sharper point of theology.

Don't put it down. My point is this. You have other churches besides you. They care about what they have known and have been praying for you because they know that I'm leaving.

And they have been praying for you and praying for your future. They love you and they long for you. And as a church body you don't need to isolate and stay off by yourself and just do it ourselves because that's exactly how we fail.

And I'm going to switch it real quick because instead of talking about just what's happening at the church level, think about the individual level. There's no more temptation to stay away from going to the worship of God's people on a Sunday than when you're going through suffering.

Sometimes you've got a physical thing, physical ailment, physical problem. It's kept you out from being with God's people. Rightly so because it's just that that's just the way it is sometimes.

[28 : 23] But when that's all better, the temptation to just go ahead and keep staying at home is so immense. The hardest step is the first step back to church.

church. It's one of the hardest steps. But listen, don't isolate yourself. Don't act as though no one cares for you because they do.

And the greatest thing that we need in our fight in this suffering to live out suffering well is to be with God's people under the preaching of God's word.

Don't isolate yourself. And third and finally, wait on the Lord. Wait on the Lord.

Verse 10 and 11, he says, after you've 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.

[29 : 24] To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Did you notice that? He's the God of all grace. grace. He's the God of all grace.

Grace before you, grace with you, grace after you. It is by his grace that he chose to save you before the foundation of the world. It is by his grace that he sent his son to die for you, paying for your sin.

It is by his grace that through the preaching of the word and the call, the effectual call of the spirit, he has called you to his own salvation so that in time and space you trusted in him.

That faith came by grace. He's the author and perfecter of faith. He is the God of all grace. Now why is Peter reminding us that he is the God of all grace?

Because the suffering comes by God's grace. grace. It's a difficult thing to swallow. But here's the thing, God brings suffering into our lives as a grace gift because he's using it to form and shape us.

[30 : 39] Satan means evil out of it, but God means good. And you notice he goes on to say that he's got a timetable. He says, when? After a little while. That suffering is not meant to last forever, but it's got a time limit.

It has a timetable. And God is not going to start a suffering for you before it's time. He's not going to end a suffering for you before it's time. So our place is to wait upon the Lord.

Wait because of his grace. Wait because of his time. And he's got a plan for your future. Think about the future he has for you. He tells you right there in four words. Restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish. To restore you is to repair what's broken, like setting a bone.

To confirm is to make you more capable. If I can carry 10 pounds and I'm confirmed, then I can carry 20 pounds. He makes you more capable, right?

And so the more that you wait upon the Lord and go through the crucible of suffering by his grace, in that he confirms you, makes you able to do even more from that.

[31 : 42] He strengthens you. To strengthen you is like cementing you down to the ground so the winds can't blow you away. To establish you is to have your roots of the tree grow down so deep and around all the rocks and bedrock there that nothing can pull you up and pull you loose.

In other words, God, by his grace, has brought this suffering into your life for this period of time so that when it's done, he can then restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

So we need to wait on the Lord. When he brings suffering into our lives, suffering that hurts, that burns, suffering that develops the dread deep within our stomachs, and the temptation of Satan comes and tempts us to doubt God's goodness, to doubt God's power, we also get tempted to squirm and run and isolate and get angry and blame and connive.

And plot some way out of the suffering. Peter's telling us that this suffering is by the hand of the Lord and he means good, he's got good plans for us through this.

And so we need to stop squirming under it. Instead, wait upon the Lord. We don't like to wait.

[33 : 07] But just imagine the story of Joseph for just a second. Joseph had a dream from the Lord that his family would bow down to him. And his brothers, they didn't like it.

So they were going to throw him into the pit. Well, they wanted him to kill him, but they threw him into the pit, and then they decided to let's sell him off into slavery. What would have happened in that moment? When he was going out to check on his brothers, if he had brought his entourage and army, knowing that his brothers didn't like him, and instead of trusting that God had his back, he sought to squirm out of what was going on with his brothers.

Or what if there in Potiphar's house, as Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him, instead of waiting upon the Lord and seeing what this whole false accusation was going to bring, and trusting that God had his back, what if he squirmed out of that by absolutely resisting and bringing forth witnesses and trying to defend his own honor?

The story is that as God put him into every one of these situations, he did it in order to save a nation. If he hadn't waited upon the Lord, if he tried to squirm out of it, if he tried to plot his way out of it, if he tried to figure some way to make the suffering stop.

Beloved, what I'm trying to get to is just this, that oftentimes we have the panic scramble when suffering comes to us.

[34 : 47] I'm just saying, trust that the Lord is good. Wait upon his fulfillment of his timing with these things. He's never late.

He's always on time. You may not feel that. It may feel really late. But by his grace, he brings it to us.

I pray that God would work in your heart and your life and that he would help you to be the kind of person who would trust him as he brings these things into your life, that you would lean upon him, that you would rest in him.

And if you have never trusted Christ, my prayer is that he would convict you such that you would before it's too late.

Let's pray together.