

No Need To Be Anxious

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[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 4th of August 2002.

The preacher is Brian Westway. His sermon is entitled No Need to Be Anxious and is from 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 7 to 14.

This is a wonderful letter that we've been looking at in 1 Peter over the last few months and it's been interspersed on a number of occasions with other messages which also have invigorated us and encouraged us in our faith.

But this letter from Peter is written as an encouragement. It's written as an encouragement to people to continue to live in the faith that they profess.

Live in the faith that they profess in a situation of hardship and a situation of persecution and a situation where sometimes they might be tempted to be anxious.

[1 : 12] I don't know as you look around the world what you see but there seems to be being experienced in epidemic proportions in this 21st century a great deal of anxiety.

Anxiety over one's career, for one's children and family, for one's body shape and appearance, for the state of one's health, for the state of the world, for the level of one's fitness, for the economy, over the share market, over the amount of money in the bank, over whether it will be enough for retirement, over the state of the church, the list goes on and on.

The causes of worry and anxiety seem to stack up on each other until all of a sudden many people can't see over the top. For some the weight becomes so unbearable, so intolerable, they buckle under the pressure and find themselves immobilised, frozen and sick.

For others they seek to push through, robbed of the joy of life but surviving as best they can under the enormous weight. I'm sure many of you have had friends or loved ones and have seen this in their lives.

I'm sure you've seen how anxiety can sap the energy and distract a person or a church from its work and put immense strain on relationships.

[2 : 49] For the people of Peter's time, one might have thought that anxiety would be the norm. Here they are facing such hardship, such persecution, such difficulties, marginalised by many people whom they formerly would have counted as friends and neighbours.

But in our passage this morning, Peter offers another view. There is, he says, no need to be anxious.

There is an alternative. Cast all your anxiety on him. Cast all your anxiety on God, we see in verse 7.

You might like to follow along as we look at these words. I encourage you to open your Bibles of page 986 and travel with me as we look at this passage.

Cast all your anxiety on him. I think we have to be careful when we look at what does this mean. What does it mean to cast all our anxiety on him?

[4 : 05] Does it mean that as the anxieties come and come into our lives that we just flick past them off to God? One by one, we say we'll hand that one across and we'll hand that one across and we'll hand that one across and God will deal with them and all will be well.

But our circumstances tell us that's not the way it is. The external circumstances don't just change like that. There's still persecution.

There's still suffering. There's still pain. There's still some difficulty associated with the Christian life as people, as we read earlier in Peter, seek not the best for these people but seek to marginalise them and to oppress them and be antagonistic to them.

So just flick passing our anxieties across one by one, I don't think, is what Peter is talking about in casting our anxiety on him.

If we back up just a couple of verses, I think there's a clue. We see where in verse 5 people in the church are asked to show a humble attitude to one another.

[5 : 20] But in verse 6, that same humility, that servanthood, that knowing your place and not seeking to promote yourself but being willing to serve others.

That in verse 6 we see is what we are to do as Christians, to humble ourselves, but to humble ourselves before God. And as we humble ourselves in that way, then we have a God of power. Humble yourselves, it says, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. the mighty hand of God, the hand of God which has, through history, saved his people.

Old Testament images of being led out of Egypt, out of slavery. Old Testament images of success in battle against those who would destroy and seek your destruction.

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, the very hand of God which raised Jesus from the dead. The power that God has.

[6 : 39] It's under that mighty hand of God that people are to place themselves. And it's under that mighty hand of God, knowing that God is able to do what he promises, that we're free from anxiety.

Cast all your anxiety on him. So, God is a powerful God. God is a God who is able to do what he promises.

God is a God who, through history, has done what he promises. But there's a second part to this verse, isn't there? Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Because he cares for you. This is a wonderful God who cares. The gods of Peter's time would not have been seen in that sort of way.

Gods of Peter's time had created human beings to be their foot servants, to feed them, to act on every whim of the God that they might be able to enjoy their superiority.

[8 : 03] They're a nuisance value but a necessary nuisance for people. But here we have the picture of God, the God that we believe in, the God that we put our trust in, who cares, who cares for us, who cares so much for us as Peter has reminded us early that he holds our salvation in his hands, that he holds it in heaven awaiting to give it to us, that he cares so much for us that his son came to die, came to die, that we might have life, cares so much for us that he wants to create us into his people, make us a special people, a people who are built up not in themselves but built up in him, built up by Christ who is the very centre of his church and of us.

So casting all our anxiety on him is about lifestyle. It's about the way we sit under God knowing our place before this great creator as he's created, knowing that he loves us and that he cares for us and that he wants the best for us.

But knowing that that was bought at a great price. Jesus reminds us in Matthew doesn't he of words similar to these.

Matthew Jesus said, therefore I tell you do not worry about your life but strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Strive to know God.

Strive to see Christ so intertwined and living in your life that you stand right with God because then and only then will you be free from anxiety, from the things that thrust in on you on you from the outside.

[10 : 31] You can trust in his power. The tomb was empty. Jesus is risen. Jesus has destroyed the power of death.

He cares for us because his son died for us. so cast all your anxiety on him.

But there's someone who doesn't want us to live this way and we meet him for the first time in the name of the devil here in Peter but he's spoken about the wiles and the deceit of the devil previously.

Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour. The image is to gulp down, to swallow whole.

The devil doesn't want us to live trusting in God, finding our strength and power from him, joyous in the salvation that Christ has won for us.

[11 : 47] But we know, don't we, that the devil knows that he can't face God head on and win the battle.

He will try and deceive, he will try and lie, he will try and accuse us in ways that deflect us and take us away from God's purpose and for our love and joy in living in his power and strength.

God's love and love and so Peter gives some words of advice. Be alert, discipline yourselves.

The image of discipline is that you're clear-minded, that you know where your salvation is, that you're clear-minded about what drives you and who you are as a person. to be clear-minded about God and his promises and his power and the strength he gives you to live your life. Discipline yourselves, live lives that are consistent with that.

[12 : 59] Live lives that give honour and glory to God and that reflect his purposes and his will. Discipline yourselves to live such a life.

Be alert. alert. There's no place in the Christian life for complacency and laziness or sleepiness. Be alert.

See the signs around you that might draw you away. Whether you be an individual in that or whether as a church, we need to be alert.

We need to be alert to the things that the devil would do in our lives to draw us away and to doubt the faith and the trust and to take away the joy that we have in being Christ.

How prepared are you? How disciplined are you? How alert are you in living such a life? It's important for the lies and the deception of the devil are subtle and they play upon our pride and on our self sufficiency and our desires for pleasure.

[14 : 17] Material possessions can so easily turn to pride and mean spiritedness. Status and power can lead to idolatry of self.

Sexual expression can be easily distorted and become abusive in a quest for personal gratification. Peter has previously in this letter reminded these people and reminds us that we were once like that.

We once indulged in those things but not now. He reminds them they are born renewed not by a perishable but by an imperishable seed through Jesus Christ through the living and enduring word of God.

And so he urged them in those earlier chapters to be holy just as God is holy and to live the rest of their earthly life no longer by the human desires but by the will of God.

it's interesting how much of this letter is taken up with describing what that looks like. What does it look like in your relationships with those in authority?

[15 : 42] What does it look like in your families? What does it look like in relationship in their case to masters maybe in ours to employers and to others who have authority over us?

For what it looks like in our lives it's important Peter has reminded these people because it shows the genuineness of who we are and it points to our wonderful Saviour Jesus.

It points other people to the one who will convict them of their sin yes but who will become the joy of their life also.

The one who will empower them and ultimately the one with whom they will stand in glory. Our faith Peter says is to be lived out in the cut and thrust of this world.

Our faith is to demonstrate who we believe in, who we trust in. Our lives are to bring honour and glory to him, to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

[17 : 02] God will be to God to God said that going won't always be easy.

This type of life will have its critics. This type of life will have those who want to oppose you. This type of life will bring pain and hurt and suffering for many.

Resist him, the devil, it says in verse 9. Resist him. Stand firm on the faith that you have in spite of the sufferings, in spite of the difficulties that you might experience.

Stand firm. But I hear you say, if the devil is like a lion, how do I stand firm as a man? Surely I'm going to fail.

Surely I'll be overcome and overwhelmed. Resist him steadfast in your faith.

[18 : 20] It's the faith that we have in Jesus, the faith that we have in the promises of God that enables us to stand firm. It is Christ living in us, it's God's promises that he has the power to do what he promises, to bring us through times of difficulty and suffering, to shape us and mould our characters, to give us a life that is necessary glory to be able to come through those times.

It's not that we won't have them, but that God, as we stand steadfast on his promises, on the wonder of what he has done for us, it's then that we're able to see the devil flee, to be able to live lives that give honour and glory to God.

Peter is talking about drawing strength from believing and encourages his readers to do that by the fact that they're not alone in this.

There are others throughout the world who are doing the very same thing. Around the world today there are many Christians facing persecution and difficulties just as we are to encourage them to stand fast in their faith.

They encourage us to stand fast in the faith. Peter's words to you and me this morning are just that. [20 : 05] Be encouraged. Stand fast with the great community of saints worldwide, even in the face of suffering, especially in the face of suffering.

But the promise is even greater. Peter in verse 10, And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.

suffering. There's a really interesting wordplay, isn't there? The suffering that you will experience for a little while, for a little while, and the eternal glory, the eternal glory that is in Christ, eternal glory that we share, that we will stand with him at the end of time.

This is the perspective we are to live our Christian lives in. The perspective of that end when God will bring to himself and glorify those who have stood firm and have stood firm in their faith, who have loved his son.

See, it is in Christ that we are to stand. It is in Christ that the Christian hope is found.

[21 : 33] It is in Christ that believers are built into the people of God. We saw that early in the letter, built up into the people of God as we live in Christ and he in us.

It is in Christ believers will share. In sufferings but it is in Christ that we will also be exalted and share in his glory as we stand fast. None of this comes from human effort.

None of it comes from what is inside us of our own human making or our own human being. It comes from Christ living in us, empowering us.

It comes from the knowledge that he is our Lord. God is that we wish to serve him, that we love him, that we want to be his person.

This is our identity, not just as individuals but as a church, built up to be Christ's body in the world.

[22 : 42] world. Sometimes I wonder though what purpose does suffering have? Does it have a purpose at all?

Earlier, right back in chapter 1, Peter said, suffering is one of those things that we experience in life that test us and test the genuineness of our faith.

life. Here Peter takes a slightly different tack and says that as we come through suffering we will see ourselves shaped and moulded and made complete.

we will be restored, we will be made complete. Any parts of our character that need repair or reshaping or addition will be given.

We will be strengthened to stand firm like granite, standing strong and we will be established.

[23 : 41] we will know the foundations upon which we stand. I was reading William Barclay and he said it's in those times of suffering that we really find those things that are really important to our lives.

All of the window dressing is stripped away. The decorations of our lives are put back in the box and we are left with those really key things that make us who we are, that encourage us to go on being who we're designed to be.

I don't know about you, I'm sure some here have gone through that sort of refining and that sort of suffering. I'm sure churches throughout the world are facing that sort of suffering as they try to stand up for God.

And they're thrust back. They're thrust back on what is most important. They're thrust back to God and his promises.

To Jesus and his salvation and his life that he wishes to impart to us. God is powerful.

[25 : 10] God cares. God will meet all of the promises that he makes for us and for his church. And in light of all of that, Peter, before he comes to those final blessings and greetings, says, to him be the power forever and ever.

Amen. Praise. We need to issue forth in praise. To God be the power. To God be all glory.

See, it's God's grace that makes us who we are. It's God's grace that enables us to live lives that are worthy of him.

And so we come to the end of this letter of Peter. Come to those final two verses, three verses in chapter five.

Peter wants to give thanks for a faithful brother, for Silvanus or Silas as he's referred to in other parts of the Bible.

[26 : 23] He wants to extend greetings from the church outside of their particular geographic area, from Babylon, a pseudonym for Rome from where he's writing. He wants to extend greetings from Mark.

He wants to see the Christian community characterised by a warmth and a tenderness and a love for each other. And so he says they're to greet one another in that way.

But most importantly he wants to say stand fast in the grace of God, in the promises of God, in his action that has been seen throughout history and has been supremely seen in the coming of his son.

God's life has been his death and his resurrection and the life that that brings. It's that that enables us to live lives which God want us to live.

I pray that there would be great warmth in our fellowship together as we encourage each other, as we encourage each other to live those sorts of lives, as we encourage each other to live that sort of life in the life of this church.

[27 : 44] And he finishes almost as he started. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. There's that word again, in Christ. All of you who are in Christ, peace.

The rich word that's been devalued so much, hasn't it, in our language. The rich word of shalom in the Jewish greeting of completeness, of being right with one's maker, of knowing that we are right. Not because of what we've done, but because through faith we are trusting in the one who can do all things. Peace is the content that the Christian life receives as they seek to follow Jesus, seek to follow and live under God's promises, seek to be God's people in the world.

I pray that we at Holy Trinity may experience that peace as we place our confidence in his grace, in his promises and seek to honour and glorify him in our lives day by day.

Amen. God Hostage.

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