

1 Peter 5:6-11 “Living in Light of God”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Love that old hymn. Thank you all for leading us in it. It is a great reminder of what Peter reminds us here at the end of his letter.

I'll tell you up front, though, as Bill said and as we've confessed together, it sounds real simple, but it's a lot harder than that in my heart. Maybe you find that to be true in your life this week.

Peter's writing to people who are suffering, who are struggling in a world that's not their home, and wondering, how are we to live?

What is it specifically that God wants us to do? Peter this morning is very clear, very direct, very specific about some practical ways that we ought to live.

[1 : 08] Some of you love that, when God is just very direct, right? We're going to be picking up our reading of God's Word at verse 6 of 1 Peter 5. As we read, I want to encourage you to notice these clear commands and the spiritual realities that motivate and enable our obedience to those commands.

Preachers call this what's true, the theological foundations, and what to do, the application to our lives.

You may realize that because God's Word so often communicates this way that I often do as well, I just usually don't say what's true and what to do.

But this morning, this passage is so simply and clearly laid out that way. We will follow God telling us what to do because of what's true.

Follow with me as we hear God's holy, inerrant, infallible Word. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.

[2 : 31] 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 eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray. God, thank you for clear direction.

We so need it. We need also your grace to help us to follow it. We're forgetful.

We are weak. We're often weary. We're dependent on you. Would you help us, even now, as we look at your word, work in our hearts by your spirit.

[3 : 42] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. What's true and what to do may seem simple, but it's really challenging when increasingly in our culture, people don't believe in spiritual realities.

Studies show that about half of Americans now believe that the God, as He's described in the Bible, exists.

A fast trend downward in recent years. In fact, only three-fourths of those who call themselves Christians believe in a God who is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful.

That last one being the primary issue for most of them. Likewise, only half of Americans believe Satan is real, with increasingly naturalistic explanations accounting for both the good and the evil in our world, right?

What you see is what you get, and is all there is, more and more people say these days. I mean, certainly having no powerful, personal God in the picture can't be helping the overwhelming flood of anxiety, suicide, loneliness, that is trending upward at equal and alarming rates.

[5 : 20] These beliefs are not certainly the only cause of those things increasing. Certainly, that's true, but they do seem connected, don't they? But you know, it's not just that more people say they don't believe in spiritual beings.

Probably, in a room that's gathered like this, more than half of us might say we believe in spiritual beings or realities. But it's quite common among us to believe in God, but to try to live without God in the equation.

We've confessed as much this morning. I went through a season not long ago when I was busy, feeling overwhelmed, needing to get more done, not sure how I was going to handle everything that was coming.

And my first response, as the wonderful spiritual person that I am, was to double down on my own efforts, to work harder, to get things done and make sure they were all under control.

That was my instinct in that moment. Maybe for you, you need wisdom for retirement, or parenting, or whatever it is.

[6 : 41] And the first place you go for wisdom is online, social media. Maybe life gets hard. Maybe you've recently been hurt deeply.

And your first instinct is to say, I've got to make everything make sense so that I can control it. Or if I can't control it, at least I can explain it. See, in those ways and myriad other ways, we tend to live as though all that's real is what we see, and God is nowhere to be seen.

We so often try, as hard as we can, to live without God in the equation, and expect life to make sense or work out. And it doesn't.

It doesn't make sense. It doesn't work out. Peter's pointing that out here. Living as we ought in this world requires awareness of spiritual realities.

Let's look at His clear commands, the what to do, and see how they make sense only. We can follow them only in light of spiritual realities, the what's true part.

[8 : 02] So, first clear command for us, how to live, what to do, humble yourself by casting your burdens on God. Look at verse 6.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time, He may exalt you. How do I do that?

Casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Live not independently, self-sufficient, but dependent upon God.

This is at the essence, the Bible says, of human flourishing. Think all the way back to that classic passage in Micah chapter 6. He has told you, O man, what is good.

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk how? Humbly with your God.

[9 : 02] That's still hard. What does that actually mean? Be clearer, Peter. What do I actually do to be humbling myself? And he says, cast all your anxiety on God.

Throw the things weighing on you onto God. Toss them. Sling them over there onto Him rather than carrying them alone.

It's the picture from Psalm 55. Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you. How will God sustain you?

By taking your burdens upon Himself. Stop pretending that you can handle all of them. He's telling you, He's telling you, throw them to me.

Bow your knee. Plead for my help. I got to be part of a beautiful picture of this last Sunday as Drew and Taylor Bozeman, still in the shock and pain of a cancer diagnosis, gathered with elders, family members, brothers and sisters from their grace group, and we prayed.

[10 : 21] We cried. We threw one burden after another onto God because they trust Him. And as we prayed in that room, I had this deep sense that the posture we were in there in those moments, kneeling before God, desperate for His help, was the one that we all need to live in every day.

The verse says, all your anxieties. Not just the big ones. Not just the heavy burdens.

Every one. The whole bag. Cast it up to Him. Because you can't. You're not made to.

Handle it yourself. It's one of our core commitments here at Southwood to acknowledge our deep dependence and our need for prayer in every moment.

Peter says simply, humbly live that way. Why is that so hard? Well, because if I'm not worrying about my problems, who is?

[11 : 48] If I'm not putting myself first, who is? If I'm not taking care of me, who will? And in a world without God, the answer is often, no one.

And that is scary, isn't it? No one will be looking out for me, taking care of me. How will we make ends meet without this job?

What if my friends stop liking me? Why am I so depressed so often? If I'm on my own, there is no way I can be humble.

No way I can cast off anxieties like those just to be lost in a sea of forgetfulness. I can't just forget anxieties like those.

And so, Peter reminds us what's true. You are to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God who will exalt you.

[13 : 03] The mighty hand is about God's strength, His power to deliver, in fact, especially to rescue His people who are suffering in this world. And exactly when is best, quite often on the day we enter eternity, He lifts us up.

God is strong. God is loving. He cares for you. That might be the most powerful phrase in this whole verse that we often overlook.

It's why we've been hitting it over and over and over this morning. Can you believe this? Could you, kids, just stop and listen for a moment and think.

Adults, stop and think. God, He cares for you. He cares for you.

He cares for you. And it seems too simple to us sometimes to mean something, but it has to.

[14 : 26] The spiritual reality here is summarized in Psalm 62. Once God has spoken, twice have I heard this, that power belongs to God and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.

You, O Lord, are strong and you, O Lord, are loving. And we need them both. You can trust Him. You're not alone.

You're not on your own. The strong one cares for you.

Do you hear that? Do you know that? The strong one cares for you. I remember some time ago going on a hike with my family and my youngest daughter felt the way I often do.

She was feeling very independent and strong and she wanted to take her own backpack and water bottle on this hike. So we started out great. I think it was at the first water break that she decided her water bottle should go back in my backpack.

[15 : 37] So it did. I mean, after all, it was hot. We were going uphill pretty soon with her excitement about the hike left back, I think, around the trailhead where we started.

she was throwing her backpack over to me and I was wearing that one too. Before we made it to the top, at the end of the hike, she was riding on Dad's shoulders with both backpacks underneath. I want to suggest to you that she was not a failure that day. that wasn't disappointing. Throwing the heavy backpack on Dad's back made more sense.

Riding Dad's longer legs by putting all her weight on his shoulders made more sense. Her joy increased largely as a result.

Our joy increased. And even an imperfect father was pleased to carry everyone and everything.

[17 : 00] Listen, friends, especially those of you who are like me, prone to being independent, but you're willing to admit you're kind of tired of that.

It gets exhausting. Maybe you're feeling that weariness today. Your father is immeasurably strong and he is unfailingly loving.

He will not let you down. Remember that that is true of him. So you can cast your burdens on him. You can rest in his arms.

You can give him the glory. That's the first thing. Second, clear command. How do I live in this world that's not my home?

What to do? Be alert to resisting Satan. Verse 8. Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

[18 : 14] Resist him. It's clear. You have an enemy. He loves to deceive. It's in his name.

He is the father of lies. So don't live like you're not in a battle. Be alert. Sober-minded. Watchful.

Be alert to the reality around you. Satan would love for you to believe that it's all up to you. That you really are at the end of the day on your own to figure life out.

But some of you insist on believing in God. And if you insist on believing in God, Satan would love for you to believe that that God will love you only if you get your life figured out and under control first.

And that puts you, in case you're not connecting the dots, in the exact same place as if you said you didn't believe in him at all. In fact, if you refuse to embrace that lie, Satan would love to use the suffering going on in your life to get you to start to believe that God can't be fully trusted just sometimes, but you can't really trust him to do what's best for you.

[19 : 40] Clearly, this illness, this relationship, this tragedy is not what a good God would want for you, he says.

No, no, Peter says, resist those lies. Don't assume that those things are just your brilliant, rational thinking. Anybody would know this.

No, you have an enemy who is a deceiver who makes it sound good. You be all the more alert to the truth of God's word. How do you resist someone who is a deceiver?

The belt of truth, which is closely related to the sword of the Spirit, the word of God itself, which Jesus quoted, by the way, didn't he?

When Satan was tempting him, what did he use to thwart those temptations? The word of God time and time and time again. The shield of faith, firm in your faith, it says.

[20 : 45] Not in yourself, right? Not that you're strong enough on your own, firm in your faith and you're strong and loving God because as you trust God and know that he is good, so good, that even the evil in your life is refining you and is making your faith of greater worth than gold, when that's really what you know to be true, then the flaming arrows of Satan coming at you will be extinguished.

He's good. He's safe for you to trust. So when Satan appears to stop up our path and fill us with fear, we triumph by faith.

The Lord will provide, right? That's what we say. Satan tells us we're weak. That certainly seems true a lot of times, doesn't it?

Satan tells us our hope is in vain and when suffering is coming and life is hard, that looks to be true too. The good that you seek, you will never obtain.

How many days do you feel like you're not going to persevere? You couldn't make it. I'm not going to last through this situation long enough to see whatever so-called good there could possibly be coming of this.

[22 : 15] maybe that's true too. I'm never going to... No. No, we say and we sing the Lord will provide.

He is good. His promises never fail and we resist. Resisting Satan, by the way, is not just a you and God and your Bible and your prayer closet kind of activity, by the way.

not just you sitting there alone trying to convince yourself of the truth if you just think about it long and hard enough. The prowling lion would love to isolate the prey like that.

Verse 9, resist him firm in the faith knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Resisting Satan is a community project, isn't it? How many of you have needed that? You've needed people around you helping you remember you're not alone.

[23 : 28] I'm hurting too. She's doubting too. He's struggling too. And these sufferings that we're in are the ones that our Savior told us we were going to have.

And they remind us of something not what Satan may be telling your heart not that Jesus has left you no, no far from it. They remind us that Jesus has bound himself to us that we are united with him in these sufferings.

The one who went to the cross we're united with him and then he rose from the grave to deliver us from these sufferings forever. And we need to remember that we're bound to him and to one another in those sufferings.

Now that we're able to travel again to some of our mission partners after COVID and get to visit them our mission team as we've been planning some trips has asked them what do y'all need? How can we partner with you? Where can we be of help? And it's amazing how many times we've heard from them recently not send a preacher or send a doctor or even send money that's usually in there somewhere but send other Christians we need to feel that we're not alone that we are not the only Christians in the world holding to the truth of Jesus and the good news found in God's word in the midst of a world that seems against us we need brothers and sisters to come be with us so when we send a team to DC when we send a family to France when we send a pastor to India we're resisting Satan with them we are locking arms with our brothers and sisters united to Jesus and by

[25 : 40] Jesus to one another to stand firm well what's true we're already talking about it you can you really can't resist Satan if you're not aware that he's real he's active he's against you you don't resist Mickey Mouse no need so again if suffering is no surprise because you're not home yet you're you're in a battle suffering doesn't shock you but though Satan is active God is stronger you dare not resist Satan unless that's true too right it's a similar spiritual reality to that first part he is the God of all grace you don't have to do enough you don't have to figure it out you don't have to measure up you have to have him he knows exactly what you need in your suffering to him is the eternal dominion the all surpassing power and authority greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world amen

Satan is a fierce enemy but he's not omnipresent did you know that he's not he's not omniscient he is certainly not omnipotent don't believe those for a minute that's not who he is greater is he that is in you Satan fights God's people only under God's ultimate control greater is he that is where in you not not some out there somewhere distant figment of your imagination God no in you so you can resist Satan without it being a fool's errand you are the tabernacle of the most high God whose spirit is in you Christian resist Satan cast your burdens on the

Lord gather brothers and sisters who can help you stand whatever is needed but by all means resist and fight and live in confident faith because of who your God is listen to what your God is going to do Peter is writing this passage right here this whole letter to people who are already facing persecution who he said are enduring sufferings of all sorts many of whom will face martyrdom for their faith listen he says no matter what no matter all of those things no matter what the God of all grace will himself personally you can count on it restore confirm strengthen and establish you he will one day set back right like a bone that's been broken and needs to be fixed everything that's been messed up by suffering that's a lot he will reaffirm your status as children and heirs he will give you power beyond anything

Satan has and he will plant you forever on the firm foundation of the good news of Jesus' love his life and death and resurrection for you so that on that foundation you will never be moved he promises he will do that it's a bunch of verbs piled up there to promise that God will bring you to glory eternally his eternal glory in Christ the Father and the Son they won't have it without you they will bring you to be there standing firm listen if you're out of patience this morning weary worn down feeling weak you need to know God will soon crush Satan under your feet that's the kind of power he gives you when he dwells in you and establishes you forever

Satan is pictured here as a lion and that that can be scary there's danger there but Jesus is the lion of Judah with the true scepter the rightful throne the eternal kingdom he is the real lion which C.S. Lewis pictures so well in the lion Aslan and the lion the witch and the wardrobe where he writes wrong will be right when Aslan comes in sight at the sound of his roar sorrows will be no more when he bears his teeth winter meets its death and when he shakes his mane we shall have spring again yes yes we will can't you hardly wait until the true king rules over everything justice peace righteousness everywhere can't you hardly wait until sorrows are no more a day where tears are going to be wiped away can't you hardly wait until an eternal spring comes life and beauty and joy everywhere unending friends the reality we must remember to live in this world is there's a God who is strong and loving how could we imagine living setting priorities making decisions losing loved ones enduring persecution without him he's greater than the very real enemy we face and because of that there's a guaranteed eternity so full of glory that it far outweighs somehow the worst sufferings that we face here your eternal life so full of glory that your finite mind can't comprehend it an eternity so full of glory that the

[33 : 07] God of all grace has called you to it and will make you fit for it forever clothed in the righteous robes of his son depend on him cast your cares on him fight with his power trust his strong hand to bring you home father we do trust you would you help our unbelief would you keep Satan and his lies from us would you anchor us in your word would you reassure our wandering wondering hearts would we feel your arms around us strong and loving and know that you care help us

Lord we are weak but you are strong and you are in us and with us and for us and so we are delighted to be yours give us rest right there we ask in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org