

Title: Standing Firm as God’s Chosen Community

Text: 1 Peter 5:1-14

Introduction

Well – friends – I’m **not sure** if you **find this** to be **true** – but **sometimes it helps** to **start at the end** when **reading the Bible**. And **Peter’s first epistle** is a **case in point**.

For – **there** – we find **Peter’s explicit purpose** in **writing**.

So – as **we bring** this **sermon series** to a **close** – let’s **begin at the end** – and **remind ourselves** of **Peter’s purpose** in **writing this letter**.

Now – if you remember – **Peter** is **writing** to **believers** who were **scattered** across the **Roman province** of **Asia Minor**. And **these believers** were **experiencing persecution** of some sort because of **their faith**.

And **things** were **about to get worse**.

For **only a few years** *after* **Peter’s writing** – the **Roman emperor Nero** would **unleash** a **full-scale** – **state-sanctioned** – **assault** – and **persecution** – against **Christians** – and the **Christian faith**.

And so – *why* did **Peter** write?

Look with me at **verses 12-14** of **1 Peter 5**:

*“Through **Silvanus** – a **faithful brother** (as I consider him) – **I have written to you** briefly – [and **for what purpose?**] – in order to **encourage you** and to **testify that this is the true grace of God**. **Stand firm in it!**”*

Then **Peter closes with a greeting:**

*“She who is in **Babylon** – [this is **most likely a cryptic reference to the church in Rome** – where **he is writing from**] – **chosen together with you** – **sends you greetings** – as does **Mark** – my son. **Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.**”*

Friends – **Peter’s purpose in writing is unmistakable:**

*In light of the **persecution** that **they were experiencing** – and *in light of* the **persecution** that is **to come** – **Peter wrote with the specific purpose of encouraging** these **believers to stand firm in the faith** – and **not to buckle under pressure.***

And while to a **differing degree** – *what is true* for **Peter’s readers in the first-century** – is *also true* – or should I say – is *increasing true* – for **believers in the 21st-century** – especially *in light of* the recent spate of events that we have seen in the **past decade or so.**

And **the thing** is this:

- *If it is true* – according to **Elliot Clark** – that we are **living in “a post-Christian – post-truth – and post-tolerant” – world.**
- *If it is true* – according to **Carl Trueman** – that **the Western public square “is no longer a place where Christians feel they belong with any degree of comfort.”**

Then the question becomes:

- **What is needed if the church is to survive – or even thrive – in such a hostile environment?**

That seems to be Peter’s concern as he brings his letter to a close.

And **what Peter wants us to see in our passage** this evening – I believe – is this:

Standing firm in the faith is a community project.

And Peter drives home this point by *first giving*:

- **A word to the elders** in verses 1-4.
- ***Followed by* a word to the church** in verses 5-9.
- ***Before concluding* with a word of encouragement** in verses 10-11.

So – *without further ado* – let's take a look at each of these in turn.

First – **a word to the elders** ...

1. A WORD TO THE ELDERS (vv.1-4)

Now – **why does Peter begin by addressing the elders?**

Well – here's my take:

I think Peter begins here because he knows that *if* the church is to survive in a world that is increasingly hostile and antagonistic to the Christian faith – the elders – that is – its leaders – play a crucial role.

After all – **one of the ways in which God provides care for his people is through the leaders that he has appointed to oversee his flock.**

And **bold – faithful – and godly leadership** is needed in the church – *especially* in times of suffering and persecution.

And so – Peter begins by addressing the elders.

Look with me at verse 1:

“I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ – as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed ...”

Notice Peter’s threefold description of himself here.

Peter describes himself as:

- A “fellow elder”.
- A “witness” of the sufferings of Christ.
- And one who “shares” in the glory that is to come.

And – in so doing:

- Peter is humbly identifying himself with the elders to whom he is writing.
- He is labouring alongside them as a “fellow elder”.
- He is in the trenches with them – so to speak.

The Task of Elders

And he exhorts the elders – verse 2:

“Shepherd God’s flock among you ...”

That’s the main verb – and *that’s* the main task – of elders.

Elders are to “**shepherd**” – that is – **they** are to **feed, lead, and protect** – and **note this**:

- **Not *their* flock.**
- **But *God’s* flock.**

What this tells us is that **the church** does *not* belong to **the elders** – *but* to **God**. They are **God’s flock**.

In other words:

- **Elders** are *but* **stewards**.
- They have been **entrusted** with **the task** of “**shepherding**” **God’s flock**.

Paul puts it this way in his parting words to the **Ephesian elders** in **Acts 20:28**:

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers – to shepherd – [same word!] – the church of God – [and notice this!] – which he purchased with his own blood.”

Did you catch that?

The church belongs to God! He bought it with his own blood! It is his!

And **elders** have been **appointed by God** to “**oversee**” – and “**shepherd**” – the **flock of God** that has **been entrusted** under **their care**.

Perhaps **Peter** has in mind that **fateful morning** at the **Sea of Galilee** – when **the risen Lord** restored – and **commissioned him** – *not once* – *not twice* – but *three times!* – with **these words** in **John 21:16**:

“Shepherd My sheep.”

And **what Jesus commissioned Peter to do – Peter – *in turn* – instructs elders everywhere to do.**

Elders are to “shepherd” the flock of God that is under their care.

That’s **their responsibility.** And **what a great – and weighty – responsibility** this is!

How Elders are to Shepherd

But notice: Peter is *not just* concerned with *what* elders do – he is *also* concerned with *how* they do it – and *why* they do it.

And so – in verses 2 and 3 – Peter gives three pairs of contrasts that describe *how* elders *should* – and *should not* – shepherd the flock of God.

***First* – elders are *not* to serve under compulsion – *but* willingly ...**

Not Under Compulsion – But Willingly

Look at verse 2:

“Shepherd God’s flock among you – *not* overseeing out of compulsion but willingly – as God would have you ...”

In other words – **no one should be forced to be an elder or a pastor.**

For **the truth** is this:

- **Eldering – or pastoring – is *by no means* an easy task.**
- **In fact – it is *often* an arduous – lonely – and thankless task!**

And **those who serve out of compulsion** – that is – ***only*** because they feel they must:

- Will eventually lose their joy.
- They will run dry.
- They will burn out.

And **this is *neither* good for the person – *nor* for the church.**

So – there ***must*** be a desire – a willingness – to serve in that capacity.

Paul – in 1 Timothy 3:1 – puts it this way:

“If anyone aspires to be an overseer – he desires a noble work.”

Did you catch the words of volition?

I think such an aspiration – desire – and willingness – is needed if elders are to do it for the long haul – and persevere in ministry.

So – a good question for elders – or those aspiring to be elders – to ask is this:

Do we serve because we ***have to*** – or because we ***want to***?

One is born out of ***duty*** – the other is born out of ***delight***.

- And **this is important** because a sense of duty – while good and necessary – can **only** carry us so far.
- **What is more important** is that we have a desire – and a willingness – to serve the flock of God – one that is born out of a love for God!

For it is **this** that will keep us going when the going gets tough.

Not Out of Greed – But Eagerly

Secondly – elders are to serve *not* out of greed – *but* eagerly.

Verse 2 – Peter continues:

“... *not out of greed for money but eagerly* ...”

Now – *I’m not sure about you* – but **I find it hard to imagine** that **anyone** would **go into ministry** because of **the money**.

After all – *it’s not as if* **pastors** are **paid well**.

In fact – *unless you* are a **prosperity preacher** – **chances are** that **the hours** are **long** – **the work** is **hard** – and **the pay** is **low**.

However – *having said that* – Peter’s point still stands:

Money must *not* be the **motivating factor** for **one’s service** in **ministry**.

One must *not* be **driven** by a **greed for money**.

A **greed** that – *sadly* – has seen many a **pastor embezzle** – or **misappropriate** – **church funds** for **their own personal gain**.

Perhaps **that’s why** a **qualification of an elder** – in **1 Timothy 3:3** and **Titus 1:7** – is that **one**:

“... *not [be] greedy for money*.”

Yes – elders *should* be **paid** – *but* they should *not* be **mercenaries**.

But it is *not just* **money**.

I think we can legitimately extend this to going into ministry for something we can get out of it – whether recognition, fame, or whatever.

Simply put: What Peter is telling us here is that:

- **We should *not* serve because of what we can get out of ministry.**
- ***But* because of our love for God and others.**

So – a **good question** – again! – for **elders** – and **those aspiring to be elders** – to **ask** is this:

Do we serve because of a desire to *give* – or because of a desire to *get*?

Peter is clear: Elders are to serve eagerly – and *not* for selfish gain.

Not Domineering – But an Example

***Thirdly* – elders are *not* to be domineering – *but* to be an example.**

Verse 3:

“... not lording it over those entrusted to you – but being examples to the flock.”

Perhaps **Peter has in mind Jesus’ words in Matthew 20:25-27** – where **Jesus said:**

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them – and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. It must not be like that among you. On the contrary – whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant – and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.”

And so – **Peter** – **echoing Jesus** – is **reminding elders** that **Christian leadership** is ***not*** about **lordship** – ***but*** **service.**¹

¹ Cf. 2 Cor 1:24

Elders are *not* to use their **God-given authority to oppress – manipulate – or take advantage of – the people under their care – *but rather* – to love and serve them.**

More specifically – elders are to **be examples to the flock.**

By the **grace of God** – they are to **seek to:**

- **Walk as Jesus walked.**
- **Talk as Jesus talked**
- **Serve as Jesus served.**

And **what better example of humble service do elders have *than* that of our Lord Jesus himself:**

- **The one who – at the Last Supper – laid aside his outer garments – took a towel – and stooped down to wash his disciples’ feet.²**
- **The one who emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant – and humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.³**
- **The one who came *not* to be served – *but* to serve – and give his life as a ransom for many.⁴**

So – a **good question for elders – and those aspiring to be elders – to ask** is this:

Do we serve because we want to be an emperor – or because we want to be an example?

So – by way of **brief recap** – elders are to **serve – *willingly* – *eagerly* – and as *examples* to the flock.**

² John 13:1-11

³ Phil 2:7-8

⁴ Matt 20:28

This is the kind of leaders that churches need – and should look out for – *especially* in times of persecution and suffering.

For leaders such as these – *in spite of* the cost to themselves – serve *not* for their own ends – *but* for the glory of God – and for the good of the church.

Such ones are shepherds – and *not* hirelings.⁵

So – as a church – let’s be praying:

- That God would bless, strengthen, encourage, and sustain our pastors and elders.
- And that God – *in his grace* – would raise up many more such men in our church.

The Motivation for Elders

But Peter is not done yet!

- He knows that it is *not* easy to faithfully lead and shepherd the church of God – *especially* in times of suffering and persecution.
- He knows that it is *easy* for elders to lose heart – and give up.

Thus – Peter ends his exhortation to the elders by providing them with a motivation – a glorious motivation! – to press on in this noble task.

He reminds them in verse 4 that:

“... when the chief Shepherd appears – you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

⁵ John 10:11-13

That’s what awaits faithful shepherds – those who fulfill the job description that we just saw in verses 2 and 3.

Peter reminds elders that *when* the Chief Shepherd appears ...

[And this – *by the way* – reminds us that elders are *but* undershepherds – they are those who have been entrusted with the task of looking after the flock of God.]

... *when* the Chief Shepherd appears – elders who serve faithfully will receive a reward:

“... the unfading crown of glory.”

Peter is contrasting two different kinds of crowns here.

***Unlike* the leafy crowns that are awarded to victors of the Greco-Roman games – crowns which wither over time – faithful elders will receive a crown that will never spoil, perish, or fade.**

- **That’s what elders who serve faithfully can expect to receive at the *eschaton*!**
- **That’s the glorious hope that awaits faithful shepherds of God’s flock!**

So – to the elders in our midst:

- **Be encouraged** – and know that *“your labour in the Lord is never in vain”*.⁶
- **And press on** – knowing that an *“unfading crown of glory”* – awaits you when **Christ comes again!**

And when he does – you can look forward to hear him say these glorious words:

*“Well done – good and faithful servant!”*⁷

⁶ 1 Cor 15:58

⁷ Matt 25:23

Well – *so far* – Peter – in the **conclusion his letter** – has **given a word to the elders**.

He has **reminded them of their responsibility to faithfully “shepherd” the flock of God** – of which **the Holy Spirit has made them overseers**.

And **Peter does this** because **he knows that godly – and Christlike – leadership is needed** if **the church is to stand firm in times of persecution and suffering**.

But not only do the **elders of the church have a role to play** – *but* **the church as a whole** – has **a role to play** too.

And so – having given a word to the elders – Peter next turns to give a word to the church in **verses 5-9**.

And – here – Peter issues **four calls to the church to help them stand firm in times of persecution and suffering**:

- **A Call to Submit** (v.5a)
- **A Call to Humility** (vv.5b-7)
- **A Call to Vigilance** (v.8)
- **A Call to Resist** (v.9)

Let's **take each of these** in turn.

2. A WORD TO THE CHURCH (vv.5-9)

First – a call to submit ...

A Call to Submit

Look at **verse 5**:

*“In the same way – **you** who are **younger** – be **subject** to **the elders**.”*

The **command** here is to be **“subject”** – that is – to **“submit”** – to **the elders**.

We’ve already seen this **theme** of **“submission”** a few weeks ago when **Rhoi** and **Scott** were **preaching**.

By way of recap – we’ve seen that:

- **Believers** are called to **“submit”** to **governmental authorities** (2:13-14).
- **Servants** are called to **“submit”** to **their masters** (2:18).
- And **wives** are called to **“submit”** to **their husbands** (3:1).

And **now** – in **our passage** – **those who are younger** are called to **“submit”** to **the elders**.

But **the question** needs to be **asked**:

Who – *exactly* – are **those** who are **“younger”**?

Now – **there** are **several options** – *but* the **two main ones** are as follows:

- **(1)** To **the rest of the church** who are **not elders**.
- **(2)** Or to **those** who are **literally younger in age**.

Decision between **the two** is **difficult** – but **I personally lean** towards **Option #1** – that is – **the view** that it refers to **the rest of the church** who are **not elders**.

Two quick reasons why **I land** here:

- **Number 1:** The notion of church members “*submitting*” to the elders of a local church is a biblical one. Hebrews 13:17 tells us to “*obey [our] leaders and submit to them ...*”.
- **Number 2:** The introductory words – “*in the same way*”⁸ – just as it did back in chapter 3 with wives and husbands – seem to *indicate* reciprocal duties.⁹ In other words – *just as* elders have a particular responsibility towards the members of a local church (vv.2-3) – *so too* do members of a local church have a particular responsibility towards its elders (v.5).

And so – Peter’s command here is that members of a local church are to *humbly* – and *gladly* – submit themselves – to the oversight of the elders.

Now – *of course* – this does *not* mean blindly following elders when they are leading us into sin – or into something that contradicts God’s Word.

But what it does mean is that we should gladly follow our elders’ lead – *insofar* as their leadership is *in accord* with what God has revealed in his Word.

And although this *seems* to be counter-cultural – let’s remember that:

- This is God’s design.
- And this is for our good.

God has placed elders over us to care for our souls.

And the thing is this:

- *If* elders lead well in the way God intends – and *if* members gladly submit to their leadership – the church will function in the way that it is meant to function.
- And it will *not just* survive – *but thrive* – *in the midst* of a hostile world.

⁸ Gk. ὁμοίως

⁹ Cf. 1 Pet 3:1, 7

And so – **Peter issues a call for the church to submit to its God-appointed elders.**

Next – Peter issues *a call to humility* ...

A Call to Humility

Look at verses 5-7:

“All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another – because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves – therefore – under the mighty hand of God – so that he may exalt you at the proper time – casting all your cares on him – because he cares about you.”

Notice how Peter begins – he says in verse 5:

“All of you ...”

In other words – Peter is here *not just* addressing church members – *but* everyone.

That is – *both* elders – *and* – church members.

Toward One Another

And the main command is obvious.

Verse 5 – we are to:

“... clothe [ourselves] with humility toward one another ...”

In other words – we are to **be humble toward one another** – in our dealings with one another.

And **how wise** – and **practical** – is **this exhortation!**

Just think about it:

How much unnecessary friction and disputes in the church could have been avoided if we were **but to simply put into practice Peter’s command** for us to “clothe [ourselves] with humility”.

Thomas Schreiner puts it this way – **he says**:

“**Humility is the oil that allows relationships in the church to run smoothly and lovingly.**”¹⁰

How true!

So – let’s strive – by the grace of God – for **mutual humility in this community of faith.**

Let’s humble ourselves toward one another.

Let us – as **Paul puts it in Philippians 2:3-4**:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit – but in humility consider others as more important than [ourselves].”

And let us:

“Look not to [our] interests – but rather to the interests of others.”

For **in so doing** – I believe that – **as a church** – we will *not just survive* – **but thrive** – even in **times of persecution and suffering.**

But **just in case** anyone may be resistant to the counter-cultural idea of **humbling oneself before others** – **Peter gives an incentive for us to do so in the last part of verse 5.**

¹⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 238.

Peter here grounds his exhortation for us to **be humble toward one another** with a citation from **Proverbs 3:34**.¹¹

Peter says:

“... clothe [ourselves] with humility toward one another – [why?] – because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

I’m not sure if we need a better motivation – or incentive – to be humble *than* this!

I mean – **do we really want God – the omnipotent – all-powerful God – to resist us – to be against us – to be opposed to us?**

I think it is a no-brainer!

If not – *then* – let’s cultivate – pursue – and clothe ourselves – with humility toward one another!

For it is there that we find his grace!

But ***not only*** are we to **humble ourselves toward one another** – we are ***also*** to **humble ourselves before God**.

Toward God

Verse 6:

“Humble yourselves – therefore – under the mighty hand of God – so that he may exalt you at the proper time ...”

¹¹ Cf. James 4:6

Now – let’s **pause for a moment** – and **ask ourselves**:

Why would Peter include the injunction for us to humble ourselves before God?

Perhaps it helps to think of what Peter’s original readers were facing because of their faith:

- **They were insulted.**
- **They were ostracised.**
- **They were maligned.**

Put yourselves in their shoes for a moment:

What do you think is the natural tendency in such situations?

Now – *I’m not sure about you* – but **I think my natural tendency is to complain** – or to **ask God why is this happening.**

I think Peter knows this. He knows the human condition. He knows the propensity of the human heart to complain.

And so – **Peter enjoins us to “*humble [ourselves] under the mighty hand of God*”.**

That is – **we are to acknowledge that he is God** – and **we are not.**

As hard as it is – we are to **accept the suffering that comes our way as part of his will**¹² – **trusting that he is using it to conform us into the image of his Son.**¹³

We are to sing – along with **the songwriter**:¹⁴

*Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

¹² E.g., 1 Pet 1:6; 3:17; 4:19

¹³ Rom 8:28-29

¹⁴ Christopher C. Stafford, “It Is Well With My Soul”

So – let’s humble ourselves:

- **Knowing** that “**whate’er he ordains is right**”.¹⁵
- And **knowing** that **his hand is powerful to save!**

And **Peter** – *once again!* – gives us a motivation for **his command**.

Why should we **humble ourselves** before **God**?

Well – **verse 6** continues:

*“... so that **he** may **exalt you at the proper time** ...”*

That’s the assurance we have as **believers**:

If we humble ourselves under **God’s mighty hand** – we *will* be exalted – we *will* be vindicated – when **Christ** appears.

Now – **all of this** is well and good – but *how* – *exactly* – are we to “**humble**” ourselves under the mighty hand of **God**?

Well – **Peter** does not leave us clueless – he tells us in **verse 7**:

*“... casting all your cares on him – because **he** cares about you.”*

This was **one** of the **earliest** verses that **I** memorised as a young believer – and **I still love it!** I still derive great encouragement from it!

A close parallel would be **Psalm 55:22** – which – perhaps **Peter** also has in mind:

¹⁵ Samuel Rodigast, “Whate’er my God Ordains is Right”

“Cast your burden on the LORD – and he will sustain you – he will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”

What **comforting truths!** What **wonderful promises** these are!

And **here’s how we practically “humble” ourselves under God’s mighty hand:**

We do it by “casting” all of our cares – all of our concerns – all of our anxieties – on him.

And **the reason we can do that is:**

- ***Not only*** because **God is all-powerful** – as **verse 6** tells us.
- But ***also*** because **he is all-good** – **he is a God who cares for us.**

But ***in what way*** is **this an act of humility before God?**

Well – **I think** it is this:

- It shows a **humble reliance** – and **dependence** – upon **God**.
- It shows **our acknowledgment** that **he** – and **not us!** – is **God**.
- It shows that **he is where our help comes from.**¹⁶

And – ***conversely*** – **not to cast our cares upon God** is actually **the epitome of pride.**

It is a **sign** of:

- **Self-sufficiency.**
- **Self-complacency.**
- **Self-reliance.**

¹⁶ Psalm 121:1-2

If that's us – perhaps we do well to remember this line from an old hymn:¹⁷

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer*

So – friends – let me ask:

What are some of the **cares, concerns, and anxieties** that **you** may be **carrying** with you **this evening**? *Perhaps* it is **unemployment**. *Perhaps* it is **ill-health**. *Perhaps* it is a **wayward child**.

Friends – **whatever it may be:**

- **Will you cast them to the Lord?**
- **Will you lay them at his feet – *knowing* – and *trusting* – that he cares for you?**

So far – we have seen a **call to submit** – and a **call to humility**.

Thirdly – we see **a call to vigilance** ...

A Call to Vigilance

Verse 8:

“Be sober-minded – be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion – looking for anyone he can devour.”

¹⁷ Charles Converse and Joseph Scriven, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

We’ve already seen this call to sobriety – to sober-mindedness – in 1 Peter 1:13 and 1 Peter 4:7.

And *since* we see it *both* at the start – *and* at the end – of the letter – it *probably* serves as an **inclusio** – a **bookend** – to the letter.

What we can gather from this is that **this is something** on Peter’s heart for his original readers – and for us.

He is concerned that we *not* be in a state of **drunken stupor** – or in a state of **slumber**.

He does *not* want us to be **caught off guard** – or **be surprised** at **what is happening**.¹⁸

No! He wants us to be **awake** – **alert** – **watchful** – and **vigilant!**

And **the reason for this** is because **we have an adversary** – **the devil** – who **stands opposed** to us – and who is **on the prowl** – **looking** for **someone he can devour**.

Thomas Schreiner is **spot on** when he writes:

“Peter portrayed the devil here as a roaring lion seeking to devour its prey. The devil roars like a lion to induce fear in the people of God. In other words, persecution is the roar by which he tries to intimidate believers in the hope that they will capitulate at the prospect of suffering. If believers deny their faith, then the devil has devoured them, bringing them back into his fold.”¹⁹

And so – **Peter exhorts us** that – as **believers**:

- **We are to be alert!**
- **We are to realise that we are in a warfare!**²⁰
- **We are *not* to be ignorant of the devil’s schemes!**²¹

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Pet 4:12

¹⁹ Schreiner, 242.

²⁰ Eph 6:10-17

²¹ 2 Cor 2:11

And **this** leads to **Paul’s final call** for us – and it is **a call to resist** ...

A Call to Resist

Verse 9:

“Resist him – firm in the faith – knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.”

The word “resist” is an active verb.

We are called to “oppose” – or – *more literally* – “stand against” – the devil.²²

And *how* are we to do that?

Well – the next line tells us:

We “resist” the devil by standing “firm in the faith”.

Remember we said earlier that Satan’s goal is to devour our faith?

And what Peter is saying here is that we are *not* to let that happen:

- We are to “resist” the devil.
- We are to “stand firm” in the faith.

I think part of what this means is that we must *not* succumb to the lies of Satan.

²² ἀντίστημι

After all:

- **That is his *modus operandi*.**
- **He is “the father of lies”.²³**

And **I think** that **in times** of **persecution** and **suffering** – **one of the ways** in which **Satan** seeks to **destroy our faith** by **sowing seeds of doubt** into **our hearts**.

Perhaps he gets us to **question God’s love** and **goodness** in **our lives** – by **sowing thoughts** such as:

- *“If God loves you – he would not let you suffer.”*
- *“If God is good – then why are you suffering?”*

And **one of the ways** in which we can **“resist” the devil** – and **“stand firm” in the faith** – is by **not buying** into **the lies** of **the devil**.

Or **better yet** – to **fight the lies** of **the enemy** with **the truth** of **God’s Word!**²⁴

- **We are to take God at his Word!**
- **And trust** – and **rest** – in **his promises!**

That’s how we “resist” the devil.

And **when we do that** – **James 4:7** tells us that:

“... he will flee from us.”

But **Peter** does **not leave it there** – **he goes on** to **give us** a **further motivation** to **do just that**.

²³ John 8:44

²⁴ Eph 6:17

Verse 9 continues:

“... knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.”

In other words – the suffering and persecution that we may experience in our Christian walk is *by no means* unique to us.

It is the common lot of believers *everywhere* – and in *every age*.

After all – Paul has warned us in no uncertain terms that:

*“... all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*²⁵

And so – we should *not* be surprised – or be taken aback – by the trials that may come our way as believers.

Instead – we should take courage in the fact that we are not alone in this. We can – *along* with our brothers and sisters elsewhere – and with the help of God – endure it.²⁶

Well – so far – Peter has addressed *the elders* – as well as *the church* – on what we should do if we are to stand firm in a hostile world.

After all – standing firm – in Peter’s mind – is a community project. We are in this together.

And – *having done so* – Peter concludes his exhortation – and his letter – with a final word of encouragement – and with this – we’ll close ...

²⁵ 2 Tim 3:12

²⁶ 1 Cor 10:13

3. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT (vv.10-11)

Look at verses 10-11:

“The God of all grace – who called you to his eternal glory in Christ – will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. To him be dominion forever. Amen.”

Now – we **don’t have time to expound this verse in detail** – but **let me just say this**:

I think **what Peter is doing** here – *after* issuing command after command – *both* to the elders – *and* to the church – is to **cause us to lift our eyes off ourselves** – and to **lift them instead to “the God of all grace”**.

In other words – **Peter wants us to understand** that *while* we all have a role to play in resisting the devil – *while* we are responsible to stand firm in the faith – it is ultimately **God who will help us do just that**.

We see here the tension between **divine sovereignty** and **human responsibility**.

Yes – we are responsible – *but* we are *not* the decisive factor.

God – the **Sovereign One** – the one who called us by his grace – is the one who enables us to persevere until the end.

That – I think – is **Peter’s point**. **Peter wants to assure us of God’s saving purposes**.

Notice what God promises to do for those of us who are in Christ:

“The God of all grace – who called you to his eternal glory in Christ – will himself – [I like that personal note!] – restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.”

These four verbs – while carrying a slight nuance in meaning – are simply making the same point – and it is this:

Even though we may have to **suffer “a little while”** in **this short life** that we live – **the God** who called us out of darkness into his **marvellous light** – **the God** who called us to himself in **Christ** – will see to it that **he strengthens** and **fortifies us** – so that **we will endure until the very end.**

That’s **the assurance** that we can have as **believers!**

- **Christ *will* hold us fast!**
- **Our inheritance *is* secure!**
- **We *will* make it home!**

Indeed – as **Paul puts it in Philippians 1:6:**

“He who started a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Of this we can be assured!

That’s the hope – the **sure and certain hope** – the **living hope** – that **we have in Christ!**

And **that’s what the persecuted church needs to hear** – and **remember!**

And so – *with this in mind* – it is of **little wonder** that **Peter concludes** – *fittingly!* – with a **doxology** – **verse 11:**

“To him – [that is – to **the One** who **called us** – and **keeps us!**] – *be dominion forever. Amen.”*

Let us pray.