

1 Peter: Expectation in Exile

“Your Adversary, Your Anxieties, and Your Exaltation” (5:6-11)

I want you to have some treasures to take away from 1 Peter. So, I’ve been encouraging you to memorize 4:19.

Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

It would be understandable if you read this verse and jump to the conclusion that God is cruel because he wills people to suffer. If you take the verse out of context, you could create a distorted picture of God. You could imagine that God tells suffering people, “Look, I’m in control. You’re not. It’s my will that you suffer. Quit your complaining and do what you’re told.”

Some justify this twisted reading because, “After all, we’ve been bad. We’re suffering for our sins. We need to do good to make up for all the wrong we’ve done.”

Others reject such a god and are determined to find immediate relief from suffering even if it means paying a high price. “No god’s going to make me suffer!”

Neither passive resignation nor angry repudiation understands God accurately. They both misrepresent him and his purposes. Both responses try to oversimplify God. And in doing so, they reject who He is.

In 1 Peter 5:6-11, God reveals that his relationship to his people’s suffering is much more fascinating than might appear on the surface. When God’s people suffer, they participate in the ultimate, universal battle between the one true, eternal God and his ancient enemy, Satan, who has declared war on human beings. Suffering is spiritual warfare. Listen for that theme as I read vv. 6-11 which begins at the top of p. 1017.

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:6–11)

This text forms one paragraph with three sections. Vv. 6-7 describe God’s care for his humble people. Vv. 8-9 describe Satan and how to respond to him. Vv. 10-11 describe God’s triumph for his people over anything that Satan may do. The message of the paragraph is evident even in its structure. God has Satan surrounded. He’s trapped. Satan cannot succeed. His schemes will fail. So, this message has two simple points: 1) Christian, you have an enemy, and 2) God has you.

Yes, Christian, You Have an Enemy

Let’s start in the middle of the paragraph and work outward. Vv. 8-9 remind us: Christian, you have an enemy. The translation we are reading calls him “your adversary” (v. 8). He opposes everything God is doing in your life. He is the devil (v. 8). The name means accuser. He’s determined to bring up anything

against you to demonstrate that you oppose God. This enemy wears many names and titles. He is Satan, the serpent, the evil one, the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and Beelzebul

It is important to remember that Satan is not our only enemy. Earlier in the letter, Peter describes another. Turn back to 1:11.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Peter is addressing Christians and warning them that their desires are at war with who they are in Christ. Too often it's too easy to blame the devil for sin when he is simply piggy-backing on a desire that we are coddling rather than killing. He's just plucking the strings that we have tuned for him.

We also note that the world around us that rejects God is an enemy. Move forward to 1 Peter 4:3-4

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) but he is simply taking advantage of the sinful nature that drives those without Christ to think and act to defy God. He loves to work as an ally with a Christian's other two enemies, the twisted passions within and around him.

The Old and New Testaments affirm the existence of this ancient spirit creature who rebelled against God and now leads an ongoing, universal coup to try to overthrow God and thwart his purposes. In our society, many reject anything they cannot see with their eyes or hear with their ears. They treat Satan as just a figment of the imagination.

But our society is in the minority. Most people around the world and through most of history know and have known the reality of this supernatural realm with Satan as the chief demon. Most recognize that good and evil are at war on a cosmic level. There is a real devil who continues to lead a mutiny against God.

Jesus and his apostles recognize this realm. Peter affirms that, as Christians suffer, they are experiencing some element of the ongoing warfare in that supernatural realm.

Christian, you have an enemy. And there are two commands or a set of commands in this passage that identify how you should respond to this enemy.

Respect Him

The first set of commands opens v. 8. Be sober-minded; be watchful. These direct you to respect Satan. He is an enemy. He is prowling and so will try to ambush you. Respect him.

V. 8 says that your enemy appears to be a lion. He can roar. Respect him. Recall that vv. 1-5 identify you as a sheep in God's flock. Nothing is more frightening to a flock of sheep than a prowling, roaring lion.

V. 9 tells you that this enemy pesters all Christians, the whole brotherhood throughout the world. He has some part in their suffering. He can do this because he coerces the help of an army of demons unified by their shared hatred of God and good. Respect him.

V. 10 implies that the damage Satan can inflict will require God to restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Respect your enemy.

V. 10 also implies that Satan will be at work opposing God's people until Christ returns. He has been at his work since before Peter wrote this letter. And he will continue to oppose until Christ comes in the full revelation of the glory to which he has called us. Respect him. Be sober-minded; be watchful.

Resist Him

However, the second command related to Satan for the Christian is "resist him." It opens v. 9. "Resist him." Let's be honest. If Satan is as dangerous as we've described him, then we ought to run from him not resist him. What business does one sheep or even a flock of sheep have in resisting a lion?

The question drives us to a biblically-balanced view of Satan. He is an enemy. But he is a defeated enemy.

Passages like Jude 6 and Isaiah 14 teach that Satan has been cast out of heaven and is now in chains awaiting final judgment. His chain is long enough for him to prowl around, but he cannot go wherever he wants. He is under God's control (read Job 1-2). You must resist him.

Satan may look and sound like a lion but he cannot ultimately devour the one who belongs to Jesus Christ. He may use suffering as a "roar" to cause a believer to fear. But he cannot inflict permanent damage.

Satan can only devour those who belong to him. Satan is the god of this world. Those who do not belong to Christ are in Satan's kingdom. But Satan does not care for his own. He comes to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10). He has no plan to bless those who belong to him. He tempts them to sin in self-destructive ways. He devours his own.

But the Christian has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into Christ's kingdom of light. You now resist Satan. I received an email this week from a member of the congregation that made the point that Satan does not have the power we might think he has. She wrote,

The devil prowls around 'like' a roaring lion. 'Like' is the word that stands out to me, he is NOT a roaring lion but tries to make us think he is. He was de-fanged at the Cross.

Christians must view Satan in light of what Christ has accomplished for us.

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

Two chapters later John writes,

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. (1 John 5:18)

Christ's death scored a decisive victory.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the

*devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.
(Hebrews 2:14–15)*

Because of Christ's victory, Peter commands Christians to resist Satan by being firm in their faith. We demonstrate confidence in God when we quote Scripture to Satan and his demons as Jesus did when Satan confronted him in the wilderness.

Since Satan cannot read our minds or examine our hearts as God can, it is appropriate to speak out loud to him God's word and command him to flee. James writes,

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7)

Christian, you do not need to fear Satan. Yes, you have an enemy that you should respect. But he is one that you must resist.

Christian, God Has You (6-7, 10-11)

And all the strength and motivation to resist this enemy comes from the promises of God. Christian, you have an enemy. But God has you. As we noted, in Peter's writing, God has Satan surrounded.

You can humble yourself under God's mighty hand (v. 6) because that hand protects you from Satan's schemes. The devil can only do to you what God allows.

V. 7 speaks about a Christian's anxieties. No matter what part Satan plays in inflicting those anxieties, you can throw them on the Lord because he cares for you. His care does not mean that he will eliminate fearful circumstances. But we do not have to lug around the anxiety that comes with those circumstances.

Christian, God has you. He's in control. There are four statements in this paragraph that explain and extol God's sovereignty and care for you.

First, v. 6, God knows the right time to exalt you (**God's Timing**). If Satan is in control, you have no assurance that you will be exalted. But God is in control. He does not tell you when you will be exalted but he assures you that it will happen at just the right time. He's in control. Humble yourself under his mighty hand even in suffering.

Second, v. 10 promises that your suffering will only be for a little while (**Limited Suffering**). If Satan is in control, he would extend your suffering forever. But God is in control. And though we will suffer to some degree throughout this life, from the perspective of eternity, it is only a little while. Satan does not even know the future, but God has the future under control. Let the Holy Spirit call Paul to witness alongside Peter on this point. He writes,

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17–18)

Third, Christian, the glory to which God has called you is **eternal glory** (v. 10). If Satan were in control, you might have a glimpse of God's glory in the creation or even in the gospel. Yet such a glimpse would

be fleeting. But God, through what Jesus Christ has accomplished, has summoned you to share in his eternal glory.

This is more than an invitation. This is what theologians name an effectual call. It is the same kind of call we hear in Genesis 1 when God said, “Let there be light and there was light.” God’s call accomplishes what it announces.

Fourth, v. 11, God’s dominion is certain now and forever (**Complete Dominion**). The ESV translation we are reading needs four letters to make it more accurate. V. 11 reads, “To him be the dominion” To our English ears that sounds like a wish. May God have dominion forever.

But the original text is more certain. Add “l-o-n-g” to the word “be” and you have the more accurate sense. “To him belong the dominion forever and ever.” He has always had dominion. He has it now. He will always have it.

Satan does not have dominion. He operates under God’s mighty hand as does the rest of creation. Whatever he means for evil, God means for good. Our God is the Master at shaming Satan and turning his evil upside-down.

And this God who has eternal dominion is, according to v. 10, the God of all grace. He is not cruel. He does ordain suffering to accomplish his purposes. But he gives the grace to endure suffering.

He’s the God of all grace. He ordained the death of his Son to accomplish what Satan wanted so desperately to prevent – the salvation of sinners like you and me.

When this short life is past, what will be your story? Will it be said of you that Satan had his way with you? Or will you humble yourself under God’s mighty hand so that, at the right time, when Jesus returns, he will exalt you with Christ in the eternal kingdom?

You were born into Satan’s bondage, but if you will humble yourself in repentance, Christ will set you free. If you refuse Christ, know for certain that Satan will never set you free. That is anxiety too great to bear. But if you will cast your anxiety on Christ, you will find that he cares for you.

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, (1 Peter 5:6)