



## Humbled Under the Mighty Hand of God

*Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World*

1 Peter 5:6-11

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A couple weeks ago, Peter drew our hearts out to God and to one another by calling us to lives of humility within the body of Christ. He called to us saying: Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1Pe 5:5) We saw that the humility that Peter was calling us to had to be rooted in an ever-deepening and soul-enriching and humbling awareness and amazement at the free grace of God given to us in Jesus Christ. An understanding of the astonishing nature of redemption is the well-spring of true humility in the Body of Christ and the outpouring of God's grace -- sweet, sustaining, sufficient, abundant grace -- the free flow of God's grace to His people and through His people to one another. God means for His church in the midst of an ungodly and hate filled world to be an oasis of grace. It can only be an oasis of grace, a place of grace and of joy and of spiritual renewal and safety if it is a church that is filled with humble hearts who delight in the grace of God given freely and abundantly to His people. So God is for us and He is for humility in us so that we can be the recipients of grace upon grace upon grace from His hands. And today, we need to see God's purpose for us to

### **1) Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God (v. 6-7)**

What does it mean to "humble yourself under the mighty hand of God"? Peter knows human nature. He knows that the great temptations in the midst of purifying trial and persecution is to question God's purpose, to question God's wisdom, to question His faithfulness and love. For that reason, Peter calls us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Now while this phrase occurs only here in the NT, it is a common concept in the OT. God's mighty hand in the OT speaks of His sovereign power. It speaks of His controlling and covering power. This phrase is used to speak of God's discipline of His people; God's work to unite His people in one heart; His gracious and faithful provision; His generous mercy; His empowering strength; God's granting of courage; His fighting on His people's behalf; His sovereign directing of our lives. The "mighty hand of God" is simply God in His sovereign power governing our lives. Whatever circumstances that we are in must be seen as coming to us from the hand of God.

To humble ourselves then under the mighty hand of God means that we do not chafe against God's providence, but rather that we bow to God's wisdom, to His discipline, to His providence

and His purposes, believing that He is governing everything in our lives with His glory and our good in mind. We must bow and confirm His loving care and complete trustworthiness and draw near to Him, confident of His refining purpose in our lives. We can do that when we know that we are God's beloved, that we have been bought with a price, that we are His chosen people, that we are the objects of His unchanging grace and that He is holding us secure until the day that Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven and we see Him as He is because we have been made like Him. This humility under the hand of God is a product of faith. And it is manifested by casting all our anxieties on Him because He cares for us.

Casting all our anxieties on Him who cares for us...What we need to see beloved is this: Our humility under the mighty hand of God is made evident, is manifested by our determination to cast all of our anxieties upon Him, certain that He cares deeply for us. The word for anxiety comes from a root in the Greek language that means to divide or tear or rip asunder. Anxieties and fears divide our minds. Anxiety and fear and worry cut a channel or a canal through our minds through which every other thought is drained. Anxiety is concern over the future, it is concern about things over which we have no control, it is doubt of God's faithfulness and of the ability of His grace to sustain us now and in the future.

And yet listen to Christ's words in (Mat 6:25-34). Do you see the foundation for Christ's counsel not to be fearful or anxious – it is His sovereign wisdom and omniscience, His sovereign plan and provision; it is your worth to your Father in heaven. In telling us to cast our cares upon God, the text that Peter quotes from is Ps 55:22. There the Psalmist's anxiety comes from the attacks – betrayal, hostility and persecution -- of those that he considered friends. While that is certainly something that could cause great despair, there are a limitless number of things that could produce anxiety or worry in a mind that is not taken captive to Christ -- death of a loved one, illness, marital strife, vocational problems, persecution because of your faith in Christ; a season of great temptation.... Instead of giving into such turmoil of the soul, as Peter tells us, we must cast our anxieties upon God because we can trust His faithfulness, His love, His power and His wisdom. In doing so we confess that anxiety and fear and worry are sins. We trust in God's providential working in our lives. We confess our trust in the sustaining power of present and future grace. We choose to believe that God will work in, through, and for us. We can trust in the power of the Lord, for His hand is mighty; we can trust in the faithfulness of the Lord, for our cares are His concerns.

And faith like that pleases God. It pleases God when we trust that He is who He says He is and He will do what he says He will do. God is honored when we hold to Him and trust in Him like that. God delights when in the midst of trial, in the midst of suffering, in the midst of difficulty, when all around us seems to be giving way, we hold fast to Him confident of what he will do. God delights to be trusted, He delights to be clung to and believed in and depended upon. The

psalmist captured the trustworthiness of God in Psalm 91. (Psa 91:1-16; Psa 46:1-3; Psa 28:7-8; Psa 9:9-10)

Now either these words are true or they are not. Either God can be trusted or He cannot. If we are going to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand we must put away our trembling spirits. We must come to a place where we call fear, anxiety and worry what they are: sin. We must repent of our sin of unbelief and pray that God would make us trust Him more. When fear assails we cast all our anxieties upon Him and come to the place where we can give thanks to God in all things because with the eyes of faith and with a convinced heart we can see God's mighty hand at work. We must trust that He has a purpose – His glory and our good, in all that He has ordained on our lives. And we need to toughen up some. James writes: (Jas 1:2-4) God's purpose in trials is produce in us a steadfastness toward Him, a fierce reliance upon God in all circumstances, to sanctify and perfect and complete us, to make us more in the image of Christ and since that work is never complete, neither will the sanctifying work of God which accomplishes it. And Peter tells us that the promise of God is this: that He will exalt us in due time.

God promises to exalt the humble in due time. Peter wrote: Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you. We gladly do this knowing that the divine power under which we bow is the

same power - the only power - that can and will raise us up. No doubt this will happen when Christ returns, but Peter is saying more: that in the time God deems best, whether in this life or in the life to come God will exalt us. God will exalt the trusting and the humble in the way that seems best to him. To become proudly rebellious, to fight against the Lord's purposes, or judge His providence as unkind or unfair, to refuse to trust Him and therefore glorify God as supremely worthy of praise is to forfeit the sweet grace of His exaltation when the trial has fulfilled its purpose. So Peter calls us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and he also calls us to:

2) Be watchful and resist the diabolical work of Satan. (v. 8-9) Notice the flow of Peter's message here. He calls us to humble ourselves under the Sovereign Lordship of God, trusting in Him in the providence of life, and then he tells us to be on the lookout for the works of Satan. Be clearheaded, be aware of what is going on around you. Why does he do that? Well, beloved, here is the truth of it. God and Satan have two very opposite desires when it comes to the fiery trials we endure for the sake of Christ. God's purpose is that we would be refined, purified, made more Christ-like. The devil, on the other hand, desires our destruction, our devastation, our ruin. He desires to destroy our faith. Here's why. Faithful submission to God in the midst of trial incites the fierce opposition of the devil, because it is so thoroughly

opposite of his character – the one who was once, according to (Eze 28:12-17). Satan, according to (Isa 14:12-14).

Peter is warning us that faithful submission to God in the midst of trial incites the fierce opposition of the devil, so we must be aware. Satan despises the children of God. He despises us who are made in the image of God, who desire to magnify God and worship Him in all things. He who is unredeemed from his sin of prideful rebellion despises us who have been redeemed from our prideful rebellion by the blood of Jesus Christ whom he hates. We have been recipients of grace and that he loathes, so he seeks our destruction. For that reason Peter exhorts us to a sober watchfulness, to be spiritually aware, of which the opposite is a kind of spiritual drowsiness and slumber in which one perceives and responds to situations, in no great measure, any differently than unbelievers.

Listen to the way that Peter describes him – the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. The picture is of prowling Satan using stealth and cunning, sneakily searching to deceive and destroy the elect. It is the picture of slinking about and then attacking suddenly and viciously. And the picture of the roaring lion is a picture of the lion who rejoices in the kill, roaring and exalting himself, bringing glory to himself for his mastery and power. This prowling, roaring lion has only one goal in mind, to devour you as prey. Satan's desire is not simply to trouble you or give you a bad day; his desire is to devour you, literally "to drink you down". The picture is of a beast swallowing its prey in one gulp. He desires to consume and destroy your faith in God, to steal the joy of salvation, to destroy your testimony, to ruin you and destroy your soul. This is a fearful picture of the devil. It is intended by Peter to be so. We need to understand who our adversary is and we need to understand how he works and we need to understand how to resist him.

Now this is not a time for a course on Satanology, but we do need to understand some basic truths about the devil. Satan is a fearful adversary. Satan is a powerful foe, a fallen angel, so powerful in fact that the archangel Michael did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." We are no match for him on our own. He is far more powerful than we are. He is not omnipresent, but he does have at his disposal a myriad of demons that do his bidding. He is the prince of the power of the air. The unsaved world lies in the power of the evil one. He binds the eyes of unbelievers. He brings accusation against the children of God. He tempts to evil and to sin. He hates God and opposes all of God's plans. On one hand, he is a powerful enemy.

But on the other hand, he is not God. He is a created being and he is a defeated foe. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ have sealed his doom. He is not able to do whatever he desires. He is on a leash. As a created being, ultimately Satan is not free to do as he wishes, but only as God allows. God is sovereign and He uses Satan and restrains Satan to accomplish

His own purposes. Roaring, prowling Satan is a tethered lion. That doesn't make his hatred any less virulent or strong. That does not make his fury any less. He despises us and were it possible for him, he would destroy all of God's elect.

When Christians suffer, the devil's desire is their destruction but God's plan in the same suffering is purification and holiness, strength and steadfastness. The devil's desire is to devour while God's sovereign plan is to prepare us for glory. One last thing, the fact that God is sovereign and that Satan is a defeated foe does not make the battle that we wage against him any less real.

Satan's desire, his goal, is to destroy our faith in God. He seizes upon times of trial and testing for God's people as an opportunity to destroy our faith. How is it that he seeks our destruction? Certainly we can see that many times it is he who is behind persecution of Christians on a large scale, the fire and sword of persecuting tyrants, the hatred of those who oppose the people of God.

But many times, the strategy of the devil and his demons is not so obvious but subtle. In the midst of trial, he subtly suggests: "God isn't strong enough to deliver you," or "Obviously He doesn't care. If this is how He treats His people, then why are you following Him?" Or if you have sinned in the midst of a trial, even after you have confessed and repented of your sin, he will accuse your conscience. He casts doubt on the gospel, he slanders God's servants who would remind you of God's faithfulness and truth, falsely accusing, slandering, and misrepresenting their hearts and motives. He comes as an angel of light or uses human agents, smooth talking and flattering liars to lead you away from the truth and into falsehood, to undermine your trust in God and to create in you fear, hatred, depression, anxiety. It is the very strategy that he used in the garden of Eden when he approached Eve saying: "Did God actually say...(Genesis 3:1) Beloved, this is a real battle.

Do not be lulled asleep thinking, "Well God is sovereign and I am a Christian and therefore I can never be lost so I don't need to be concerned with resisting Satan because ultimately I will be okay so this no big deal. Peter is making a big deal over nothing." Thinking like that is defective thinking. It is the same kind of defective thinking that makes allowance for sin by saying it was God's will anyway. This is not some word game when Peter calls us to resist Satan. This is so important so listen now!! It is true that true, born-again Christians cannot possibly be devoured by the devil. They are eternally secure precisely because true, born-again Christians do resist the devil, firm in their faith. True born again Christians do not fall away precisely because the Spirit of God dwells in them moving them, to fight the fight of faith. It is not magic. It is a fight that by the Spirit of God we win. There is God's promise to preserve us, but the means of God's preservation is our fighting by the power that He supplies in the Holy Spirit. You see, Satan would seek to destroy us, and God allows and restrains Satan's hand against

Christians, but always by His sovereign wisdom and always for our good, to strengthen us and refine and toughen us spiritually.

So it is like this: A Christian is sovereignly brought by God, according to His wisdom, into a time of testing to refine his faith. Satan or one of his demons is either allowed by God to be the source for that testing or trial or to add affliction to the test that God brings seeking to cause the faith of the Christian to fail. God allows him to do it, only He strengthens the believer by the Holy Spirit to stand firm in the faith in the midst of the trial and to emerge therefore stronger and more sanctified as a result. In that, the devil serves the purposes of God in refining us and making us more like Christ even as he seeks to destroy us. But this is not just automatic. In order for that to be the case we must resist the devil firm in the faith, empowered by God's Spirit. And if we are born again Christians we will not fall away but resist Satan and fight the fight of faith until we triumphantly persevere. Even if we sin at first, we will repent and rise and resist Satan until we win.

How is it then that we resist Satan's attempts to devour us? How do we stand firm in our faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. How do we resist Satan? By standing firm in our faith. And what does that look like? Paul gives us some insight over in Ephesians 6. (Eph 6:13-20)

How do we stand firm in our faith? Girded with the belt of truth – certain of the truth of God's word, taking every thought captive to Christ, thinking on what is honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise. Clothed in the breastplate of righteousness -- the righteousness of Christ imputed to us as His people. Standing unshakably upon the gospel of peace with God. Taking up the shield of faith – vital and dynamic reliance upon the revelation of God in His word -- standing upon what God has said in His Word about the freeness of grace, the sinfulness of sin, the justice and love of God, the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, imputed righteousness, and about God's preserving power – the shield with which the fiery darts of Satan will be extinguished. Putting on the helmet of salvation – that which protects our minds gives the assurance of God's continuing work in our lives and confidence in a full, final salvation to come. Using the sword of the Spirit -- If there were any questions about the purpose of the armor of God, the last piece dispels them all. There is only one thing for which you use a sword, and that is battle. A sword is a weapon in the purest sense of the word. When Paul calls the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, the Greek that Paul uses here for "word" is not logos, the standard definition for God's general revelation of Himself, instead he uses the word, "rhema." Rhema means a specific saying of God, a passage or a verse which has special application to an immediate situation. The "sword of the Spirit" is the truth of God applied to a specific situation. This is the great weapon placed in the hands of a believer for this fight of faith. The beautiful thing about this sword is that it does not

only fit the hand of the preacher or the teacher alone, but every hand of every man, woman and child who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And the way we wear this armor and stand firm is by praying at all times – in earnest prayer and supplication for all the saints, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by our brotherhood throughout the world, determined for the sake of Christ to remain faithful and to pray for the triumph of the gospel. Leave any part undefended, that is Satan’s access point. As James encourages us: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (Jas 4:7-8a) It is in this that we can

3) Rejoice in the hope-filled purpose and promise of God (v.10-11) What a promise of God. How rich this is. This is the great theme of 1 Peter. The God of all grace will sustain you and lead you to glory. God hasn’t forgotten you in your trial. He is the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ in the first place. Thus you can trust Him to use the trial for His purpose in your life, because He is the sovereign Lord who has all dominion forever and ever. He who has called you, regenerated you, converted you, justified you, adopted you, and is sanctifying you will glorify you. Glory is God’s eternal intention for us.

And the promise of God is that this God will not only exalt us in due time, but that He will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. He promises to finish what He has started.

What else can we say? To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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