

Suffering for the Will of God

Intro: Peter was written to Christians scattered around the world to encourage them/us to stand strong when suffering for the sake of Christ. If you look at the cover of the bulletin you note the general theme for this series, that we face trials by surrendering our lives into the hands of Jesus, even as He surrendered His life for us. Today's passage moves from the external slander and even persecution we face from the world and wraps up the letter by dealing with our in-house struggles with pride, anxiety, and the devil. We will consider it in two parts: Problems that comprise suffering for the will of God and the Promise that sustains us.

Problems: Pride, Anxiety, and the Devil

- **Pride:**
 - Exhortation to elders emphasizes humility—not lording over but setting example
 - Elders are fellow-elders with Peter who is apostle, witness and participant of glory to come.
 - Potential for conflict even in church relationships: All called to be clothed in humility.
 - **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**
 - Pride is self-exaltation, arrogance w/ regard to others, even w/ respect to God; it isolates and alienates.
 - Humble yourselves (reflexive) *under the mighty hand of God.*
 - Humiliation debases, enslaves, diminishes
 - Humility ennobles, exalts in due time.
- **Anxiety:**
 - Pride-related insecurity, worry, fear, doubt: All about self not being in control, not trusting God.
 - Solution: *Casting all your anxiety on Him...* = surrendering your control, submission to Him
 - *Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God* (Phil. 4:6).
 - *Commit your way to the LORD, trust Him, and He will do it* (Ps. 37:5).
 - *Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you* (Ps. 55:22a).
 - He cares for you! He repeatedly tells us to trust Him and not to rely on our own strength.
- **Devil:**
 - Your Adversary! The father of Pride, dealer of Doubt: *Prowls like a lion seeking someone to devour.*
 - *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.* External violence and internal vulnerability.
 - Temptation sneaks in but we are responsible =by grace free to respond
 - Resist him, firm in your faith . . . With what faith? Faith in the Promise. . .

Promise: The God of all Grace

- How? *Knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren in the world.*
- When? *After you have suffered for a little while...* Why not immediately? Comfort in His purpose, His timing.
- Who? *The God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ...*
 - Invested in you at the Cross! Called to Him.
 - Called (destined) to His glory in Christ.
- How? *Will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen!*
 - As we struggle with pride, anxiety, or with the devil in general, we are not alone. Though aliens in the world, we are part of the world-wide family of God past, present, and future.
 - It is the mighty hand of God that sustains, and the struggles serve to reveal His greater grace and glory.
 - For years I was not eager to read Peter with its emphasis on suffering for the sake of Christ.
 - But I've discovered a depth of comfort and assurance that deepens my joy and security in the glory of God into which I've been thrust by His grace.

Conclusion: A frequent criticism of biblical sermons is the lack of practical application. Here's something specific we can do. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, cast all your anxieties on Him, resist the devil by putting your self into the hands of Jesus. Do it today and watch how He will sustain you in His grace.