

**Letters From A Fisherman**  
**Week 20**  
**1 Peter 5:5-14**  
**“Final Thoughts”**

**Introduction**

**Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for The LORD your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9**

As we come to the final portion of **1 Peter**, we see the apostle offering final words of advice. You can almost feel the anxiety in his words, as he seems reluctant to close out his letter. It is obvious that Peter cared deeply about these suffering Believers and wanted them to know that they were not alone in their struggles. As bad as it had gotten, things were about to get even worse, and the faith of the church would be tested to its very limits. But it is God Who saves us, and it is God Who keeps us. So we put all our hope and trust in Him, and Him alone.

I cannot begin to imagine how stressful a time it was during the three hundred years of Rome's relentless persecution of the Church. I hear Christians today complain about things that wouldn't even cause a moment of concern to those who have truly experienced suffering. My family spent some time living in an orphanage in Guatemala. The things I saw all around me there completely changed my way of thinking. We, in this country, by and large do not know what true hardship really is.

I am by no means saying that we here in the states don't have problems. We most certainly do, and I am not trying to minimize that. But the greater majority of the planet has it far worse. And one thing I learned while I lived in Central America was that people who belong to Christ have lasting joy and peace even amidst their struggles. I heard a Guatemalan pastor once say, *“In America, you believe in God. But in Guatemala, we depend on Him.”* I think that is exactly the attitude that Peter is encouraging the persecuted church in Rome to have so many years ago. He knows that there is nothing within his power to rescue them. So, in order to endure, they would need to fully trust in God's power and amazing grace.

Nero was as evil as a man could possibly be, and his authority was undeniable. He could simply speak a word, and multitudes were massacred. And to back up his viciousness, he had the mightiest army that, at that time, had ever marched upon the face of the earth. Slaves, as well as nobles, were all subjected to his every whim. It would have seemed to the casual observer that this man had absolute power, but his power only lasted for a season. The Christians who suffered under his persecution were also subject to a mighty throne. But unlike Nero's throne, theirs was occupied by an Everlasting King. Nero would do his worst, but King Jesus would see to it that His chosen ones would endure! In the end, it was always a question of who had the greater power. And truth be told, it wasn't even close!

No one who served Christ wholeheartedly has ever lived to regret it. Many, on the other hand, have wandered from the faith, and as The Scripture says, **“have pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:10b)**. I think that the modern church could learn a great deal from the persecuted church of Peter's day. They were *all in* when it came to following Christ. They had to be, for to follow very well could have meant a death sentence. I am often convicted by this thought, ***“If everyone in the church were only as committed to Christ as I, how effective would the church really be?”*** I can tell you for a fact that there are more than a few who simply flit about the perimeter of the church without ever truly entering in. They are here today... and gone tomorrow. But if the first century church was as lackadaisical in its faithfulness, I am pretty sure that none of us here would have ever even heard of the gospel!

So what is the attitude of the committed follower of Christ really like? I believe we can see a great example of it in Peter's final words to the suffering Believers in Rome. To have the proper perspective on reflecting the image of Christ amidst trials and tribulations, one must *Get Small, Get Sober, and Get Strong*. Please allow me to explain.

**Get Small (vs. 5-7)**

**In the same way, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because**

**God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. (Pr. 3:34)**

**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.**

**1 Peter 5:5-7**

After Peter finished writing to the elders of the church, he addressed the church proper. Beginning with those he called, **“you who are younger...”**, he admonished the church to subject themselves to the leadership of the elders. Many have speculated as to whether he is talking specifically to the “youth” of the church or to all members in general. It was customary in those days for those who were older and more mature in their spiritual walk with The LORD to lead the church with older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women (**Titus 2**). So, more than likely, this is the case. But the rule of submission applies to every Believer. We are all called to submit to one another out of respect for Christ (**Ephesians 5:15-21**).

To emphasize this truth, Peter instructed all the Believers to **“clothe yourselves with humility.”** The word that Peter used for clothe, literally means to wrap around oneself, as one would a towel or an apron. Without question, this has to be a reference to Peter’s own witness of Christ taking off His outer garment and wrapping Himself in a towel in order to stoop down and wash the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper. What an impact this must have made upon the rugged fisherman to have his LORD wash his dirty feet! It forever changed his perspective, because prior to this act of devotion, the disciples had been arguing amongst themselves as to who was the greatest, undoubtedly in order to decide who would get the best place at the table! Jesus took this as an opportunity to teach them exactly what His love requires. None who follow His example will seek to make themselves greater, but rather, they will make themselves less.

To become what Christ has taught us, we need to **“get small”**, to wrap ourselves in humility as opposed to pride. **God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.** So many Christian leaders today would do well to remember those words, for when you are filled with pride, then God is working against you. Is it any wonder why many “so-called” ministries fall flat on their face? Could it be that instead of having the power of God at our disposal, we actually have it working against us for we have forgotten that **apart from Him we can do nothing!** (**John 15:5**). Only the efforts of the humble shall be exalted by God, for they are done for the sole purpose of giving Him glory. And God will not share the glory that is His alone with another living soul (**Isaiah 42:8**). Want to know if someone is truly walking with God? Watch for the humility that comes from an encounter with the Risen Christ! No one has a single thing to offer. No one has a single thing of which to boast... save Jesus!

I see a great deal of hubris (exaggerated pride) in the modern day church, and that my friends is the reason the modern day church is largely ineffective. Listen to the words of Christ to the church of Laodicea:

**For you say, ‘I’m rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,’ and you don’t realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.** **Revelation 3:17**

You may fool yourself into thinking that you are something. You may even fool others into thinking that you are something. But God knows who you truly are.

And many also have what is a false humility, which is actually also hubristic. Have you ever met someone who seems to be proud of how humble they are? They say things like, **“I’m so lowly and wretched. How could anyone ever love me”**, all the while waiting with bated breath for someone to say, **“No you’re not, you’re really very special.”** That’s not humility. Humility doesn’t think of itself as high or low. **Truly humility doesn’t think of itself... AT ALL.**

Show me a person who constantly goes around complaining about how tough they have it, and I’ll show you someone who is self-absorbed. We are called to be dead-to-self. And dead people have this one thing in common: Dead people don’t feel anything! You’re not the **worst of the worst**, and you’re

certainly not *better than all the rest*. You're just like all the rest of us, a sinner who desperately needs Jesus! Remember that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So get small. And take all of your insecurities and anxieties to Jesus... because He cares about you! **(vs. 7)**.

### **Get Sober (vs. 8-9)**

**Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow Believers throughout the world.** **1 Peter 5:8-9**

The word that Peter used for "sober" is "*nepho*" in the Greek (pronounced nay'-fo), and it carries with it the idea of being circumspect (suspicious and cautious). In short, Peter is warning all Believers to be on the lookout for Satan and his ways. So many people just seem to coast through this life blissfully unaware that there is an adversary who would love nothing more than to destroy them. For by bringing about the fall of a Believer, he is able, or so he thinks, to discredit God.

The devil (or *diabolos*, as Peter identifies him) uses his wiles to not only cause God's people to stumble, but then accuses them before the throne of God when they do. It is as if he acts as a prosecuting attorney, who brings cases against us in God's holy courtroom. If you wish to see how this works, you need look no further than the ***first chapter of the book of Job*** to see Satan at work. Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus we too have an attorney, and advocate Who speaks on our behalf, or we would be without hope. The writer of Hebrews reminds us:

**Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.** **Hebrews 7:25**

Peter knew first hand what it was like to be completely wrecked by the devil's wicked entanglements. Jesus had warned Peter that such a test was coming

**Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.** **Luke 22:31**

Here is the perfect illustration of the accuser and the advocate at work. I especially love the part where Jesus says "**when you have turned back.**" He said "*when*" and not "*if*". Why? Because when the advocate takes up your case before the throne he has a winning record of 100%! That's why. To be in Christ is to be protected, even when we fail. No one understood this better than Simon Peter. For during his time of testing, he failed miserably even to the point of cursing like a sailor and denying his LORD. But then Jesus came after him and turned him back from his wanderings. And here in this last chapter of *1 Peter*, we see the old fishermen doing exactly as Christ had commanded him after he had "*turned back*", he is strengthening the brethren. Peter warns us. Keep a sharp eye out for the devil is roaring (the Greek actually means howling like a wild animal crazed by hunger), and he longs to devour (*katapino* meaning to swallow whole) every one of God's people that he can.

The only way that we can resist the devil is to remain firmly entrenched in the faith. Jesus warned His disciples (*including Peter*) in the Garden of Gethsemane to "**watch a pray, lest you succumb to temptation**" (**Matthew 26:41**). And what did they do as a result of such sobering advice? They fell asleep! Now can you see why Peter warns us to be sober and vigilant? For it is the *sleeping* Christian that gets devoured!

A word to the wise here: The devil isn't the least bit afraid of you, but he is terrified of Christ. So draw near to Christ, and the devil will run away like a scared little rabbit. This is Peter's message to all Believers: "*Get Sober! Wake up, watch and pray, and stay as connected to the Savior as you possibly can, then you won't end up in a courtyard full of witnesses hearing you deny knowing The LORD*".

**Get Strong (vs. 10-14)**

**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.**

**Through Silvanus, a faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! She who is in Babylon, 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.** **1 Peter 5:10-14**

I love the phrase **“after you have suffered a little while..”**. Many years ago, I heard a pastor say his favorite phrase in The Scriptures was, **“And it came to pass..”**, for it serves as a reminder to us all that no matter how terrible a particular trial may be, it will not last forever. Peter wanted his readers to understand that despite the intensity of Rome’s persecution, every Believer has the hope of deliverance. Even if the tormentors take our lives, we have the inextinguishable hope of life everlasting.

Another thing for us to always remember is that God uses testing and persecution to mature us, enabling us to be transformed into the image of Christ. Where there is no smelter’s fire, there can be no refining. So whatever enters into the life of one of God’s elect was allowed to come by God Himself. When we truly understand this reality, then we learn to glory in our trials, for we know that all things are working together for our good (**Romans 8:28**).

Peter uses four words to explain what God will do when we are tested and tried. First, God will restore us. The word used here rendered “*restore*” is actually a word commonly used by fishermen (imagine that!). The word is “*katatizo*”, and it literally means “to mend”. Fishermen used this word to describe the mending of their nets, when they became torn from excessive abuse. What a comfort to know that when this world tears me to pieces, my God will mend me and make me whole! This is the hope we have in Christ. Our God heals.

The second word Peter uses is “*sterizo*”, and it literally means to permanently set fast or establish. This world may want to destroy us, but thanks to Christ, our Advocate, come what may, we shall most certainly endure. Persecution is real, but so is heaven. And none of Satan’s followers will ever enter there. The Nero’s of this world come and go, but the child of God endures.

The third word that Peter uses is “*sthenoo*”, and it is accurately translated as “strengthen”. We must always remember that just as a weightlifter pushes his body to the limit in order to gain strength, so God uses the difficult things in this life to strengthen us. As the saying goes, “No pain, no gain.” Life is supposed to be difficult. Did you know that if you help a butterfly emerge from its cocoon, it will never have enough strength to fly. How does it build its strength? By the struggle it must undergo in order to emerge ready to face life’s challenges. The same goes for a chick hatching from an egg. Those who are helped in the process rarely survive, and even when they do, they are always weaker than their nest-mates.

The fourth word Peter used is “*themelioo*”, which means to place upon a solid foundation. We are the church of The LORD Jesus Christ, and we, as living stones, are being established upon Him. He is our firm foundation. And as we place our full weight upon Him, as we cast all our anxieties upon Him, and yes.. leave them there, we are truly standing on solid ground. As the old hymn so eloquently states: *On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.* So stay faithful, draw near to God, and trust His judgment, as He leads you through the valley of the shadow of death. Trust and do not complain, for the complainers often times find themselves left in the wilderness to perish (case in point *The Exodus*). For the journey is not only essential to your growth, but also, He will go with you every step of the way.

This concludes our study of Peter’s first epistle. And just as he closes with greetings and blessing for all who mean so much to him such as John, Mark, Silas his stenographer, and all who are in the church with him, I too would like to say to you all: “Peace to all of your who are in Christ.

And let the suffering, and triumphant church all say... TRUTH!!!