

Well, today's the final instalment on our series of 1 Peter. And today's reading is part summary and part conclusion, of what he's been teaching us all the way through.

And the title that I've given today's message, is "The Church in a State of Readiness."

The whole context of 1 Peter, is he's writing to Christians who are suffering, and particularly, they're suffering persecution... It's about to get a whole lot worse for them, but even when we're **not** going through severe persecution, it's still 'normal' for disciples of Jesus, to suffer for the sake of their Lord... Rejection and abuse – is (pretty much) a normal experience of being a Christian in the world...

But this present reality (of suffering; rejection; abuse) is only for "a little while"... In 4:7, he said "**The end of all things is at hand....**" And he reminds us again today, that the suffering only goes on for a little while, until Jesus returns, and **wow**, what a blessing we're in for then...

So, he sums up, how (for this little while) we live in readiness... BTW, when he says "In a little while", it can mean for our whole life. Compared to eternity, a lifetime is but a moment...

So:
#1.

Living with the expectation of the return of Jesus, is a life of humility – we touched on this in the last message... **Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."**

Peter understood this very well – Jesus had drilled it into them :

- the example of where you take a seat at a table – take the lowliest spot, and then the host will exalt you (Oh, you shouldn't be down here with the plebs – come up to the head of the table with me)...
- When the disciples argued amongst themselves “who was the greatest”, Jesus said “If you want to be the greatest, you be the servant of all... and
- Of course, there was the example of Christ Himself – He is the master, and yet, He took the place of a servant, and **now** He's been exalted to the highest place.

And so V6 says: **⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you**

Alright, this is Basic Discipleship 101... We humble ourselves amongst each other, but we're also supposed to humble ourselves out in the world... And even when the world's got it in for us... And even when we're being persecuted... *It's drummed into us – stand up for yourself – don't take any rubbish from anybody...* Well, if Jesus stood

up for Himself in the face of injustice, He never would've been crucified... He humbled Himself, even to death... And that's the way of disciples of Jesus... We **don't** retaliate – we **don't** fight back... We humble ourselves (maybe even to the point of death)...

And that's OK, because **at the proper time** (when's the proper time? When Jesus returns.) **so that at the proper time he may exalt you...**

2.

Which brings us to the second point. Dealing with anxiety in such troubling times...

Now, Peter's already said to these guys, "Don't think something strange is happening to when the troubles begin (don't think that this ought not to happen)... And he's told us that it's sometimes God's will for us to suffer, and it's normal for Christians to suffer...

You see, that's what the sovereignty of God is about... God doesn't have to act in the way that I want/expect Him to act... You see, as we humble ourselves, and as we go through troubled times and even persecution and suffering, Peter reminds us, that we're under God's mighty hand. When we suffer, it doesn't happen without God's permission. God is still in control... And so Peter says ⁷ ... [cast] **all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

Do we believe this? Do we believe that God is in control? Too right, He is. Do we believe that He cares for us? Too

right, He does – that was settled once and for all, at the cross...

And so we have no reason to be anxious... If we are under the mighty hand of God, and God cares for us, we can trust Him... And whenever anxiety does start getting a bit of a foothold in your life, how about you praise God – Lord, You've got this, and I'm **not** going to be anxious – you've got this.

How big is our faith in God??? I'm going to tell you something – a tiny little faith can cope with God removing our troubles... Whereas the faith that God calls us to, trusts in His mighty hand, through some of the worst troubles we could ever imagine...

3.

Next, **Be sober-minded** (think clearly). And we already talked about this at length (Back in Chapter 4). As we approach the end, think clearly, so we can pray clearly... Even if everybody else is in a panic, we should never panic, because we know that God has everything in hand.

#4.

be watchful

There's 2 elements to watchfulness. Jesus told a **lot** of parables about being watchful – being ready for His return. And there were 2 main messages from these:

1) Keep your faith

- Don't let the fact that He's been a long time coming, ever be a cause for us to let our faith slide; **And**
- Here, I think Peter's telling us, don't let the threat of persecution, be something that deters us from being faithful followers of Jesus....

2) And the second type of watchfulness, is watching out for distractions/diversions

- False Christs;
- False gospels;
- False prophets;
- False teachers

5.

And Peter launches right into this – watch out for the Devil (Actually he says “**Resist**” the devil).

be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

⁹ Resist him....

One of the greatest tricks that the Devil ever came up with, is to get people to stop believing that he even exists... And sometimes those who **do** believe he exists, have a silly cartoon image of what Satan is like – he's all fun and part of a funny joke...

But the thing is, to Christians, he's no joke – he's our **adversary**... And let me be very clear about this – the Devil's target, isn't (so much) the unsaved (he's already got

them) – his target is the disciples of Jesus. When someone becomes a Christian, their life generally gets harder. Do you know why? Because they've got a new adversary – a new enemy at play...

The Devil, is our adversary. And he's not a cartoon character – he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him....

How can we resist the devil??? I mean, we're just humans, and he's a powerful spiritual being... But let's not forget, that we are under the mighty hand of God, and He's already defeated Satan...

Now, to resist the devil, in some ways, I think we need to understand our enemy – “What's he trying to achieve?”...

Here, Peter shows us that the Devil's the one who is behind persecution (no surprises)... It's **him** we resist, as we go through persecution... But for what purpose? Is he wanting to kill all the Christians? Well, that wouldn't do him any good. Whenever a disciple of Jesus, loses their life for Jesus, they go straight to be with the Lord. And they are exalted (immediately)...

And the Devil, loses. When a Disciple of Jesus remains faithful to Jesus unto death, that glorifies God... And the Devil hates it.

I suspect, that what Satan is trying to do, is to make us so fear for our lives, that we turn away from Jesus. But it sorta backfires on him (ya know)... Sure, when under the threat of persecution, someone (who started out following Jesus) falls away, the devil's achieved his goal... But when (despite rejection; abuse; and threat of prison; and torture), one of Jesus' little ones continues to witness for their Lord, **God is glorified...**

How serious are we for Jesus??? As we've been working our way through this 1st Letter of Peter, we've been confronted by this, all the way through... How serious am I, for Jesus???

The story is told of a young man declaring his love for his woman. Over the telephone, he expresses his feelings. "Oh my darling,, for you I would cross a vast desert. For you, I would swim a flooded river. My love for you has no bounds."

To which she answered, "Oh honey, Please come and visit tonight."

And he said, "No, my dear, I'll come tomorrow night when it's not raining."

How serious are we for Jesus??? We:

- Sing songs about eternity; and
- Setting our hearts on eternity;
- Sing songs about Jesus and tell Him how much we love Him;

- We pray prayers of commitment, and I will follow You
- To the ends of the Earth (even)...

But when the chips are down, how serious are we (really) for Jesus???

We resist the devil, with firm faith; never shifting; always trusting; always following...

In Rev 12, we get a picture of what's going on in the spiritual realm.

Revelation 12:10-11 (ESV)

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Do we understand this??? The Devil's aim, is to use persecutions, and even the threat of death, to try and get us to lose our faith... And we conquer[ed] him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony, – in other words, by holding on to our faith; by being witnesses for Jesus.... and by **loving** Him, more than we love our physical life...

Is our love for Jesus and commitment to Jesus, merely a song lyric? Or is it fair dinkum???

#6.

We're not alone... **Yes**, we're under God's mighty hand, but more than this – Peter reminds his readers, that the church across the world (the brotherhood) across the world, also suffer the same kinds of things...

It helps (doesn't it?) to know we're not in this alone – to know that our brothers and sisters in Christ, endure the same troubles as we do, and often worse... And Peter says "That's an encouragement to you (right there) – others are continuing to be witnesses for Jesus – you do it too..."

And so, we come to the glorious conclusion: V10

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.

What an amazing thing, the Grace of God is... The God of all grace, has called **us** to eternal glory in Christ... For a little while, it might seem like the Devil's getting the upper hand, but not at all... **He Himself** (our God of all grace), will

restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish Who??
You; me; He does this for those He has called...

When Jesus Christ comes in His Kingdom, with all His glory,
we're going to be a part of that...

No matter how much the world would try to

- tear down the followers of Jesus, He will **restore** us
- mock & belittle & demean, He will **confirm** us
- attack and weaken us, He will **strengthen** us
- Tear our Lord down, and erase His children, He will **establish** us

That's the God of all grace... How can we respond to such a
blessing??? With worship. And that's what Peter does: ¹¹ **To
him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

But this is more than worship – it's a statement of fact. To
Him be dominion forever and ever – that means God is
sovereign – He's the King – He's the Ruler... For now He
allows the Devil to be the ruler of this world, but Satan
doesn't have dominion over us. And we look forward to the
day, when Satan and his evil demons, will be cast into the lake
of fire, and his rule will come to a complete and utter end, but
to our Lord, there is dominion forever and ever...

This, is the true grace of God...

As Peter wraps up his letter, he says a few pleasantries. It seems Silvanus was his scribe (good job Silvanus). But even again, he says “**this is the true grace of God**”... To:

- suffer for Christ;
- continue being a witness for Christ;
- be humble; and
- receive the glorious reward at His coming

this is the true grace of God...

It makes you think, doesn't it – “I wonder what the fake grace of God is?”

I'll tell you what the fake grace of God is – it's that gospel that tells you that God will never let you suffer or go through hardship or persecutions... It's any gospel that appeals to our worldly temporal desires, instead of fixing our hearts on eternity...

But, **this is the true grace of God**. And we need to **Stand firm in it**.

V¹³ She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

The early church, referred to Rome as Babylon. And that's why we believe Peter was in Rome, when he wrote this letter.

It was a godless place – the stem of Nero’s persecutions that saw Christians burned as garden lighting; fed to the lions, and utterly despised and hated across the empire... And **She who is at Babylon** – he’s referring to the Christian church in Rome. Just as we refer to a ship as a “she”, we refer to the church as a “she”... And why not? The image of the church, is the bride of Christ...

And so the church in Rome (the chosen of God) send their greetings, as does Mark, (Not Paul’s literal son, but) a son in the faith.

V¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

And that’s the end of the letter.

But these words at the end – they’re not meaningless pleasantries... **¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love.** means love each other – like family...

And Peace, isn’t wishful thinking – Peace, is for those of us who are in Christ...

How did you handle the message today??? Did you go through some periods of unease and distress, (maybe you did)...

But did you come out the other side??? You see, this has been Peter's purpose – to help us get past the anxiety; and unease; and distress, and to fix our eyes on true grace – that we're under the hand of God, and God's got this...

And so don't be anxious; don't be distressed – God's got this
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
We humble ourselves before You.
Knowing that even though we may be humbled through trials and troubles and persecutions,
We know You've got this,
and we know that You will help us
to continue being witnesses for Christ.

Lord, we long for the day of Your return,
And so help us to be watchful:
That we would be eagerly awaiting You;
And that we would be watching out
for the Devil and his evil schemes.

Lord, again we pray for the brotherhood;
For our Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
who suffer for Your Name's sake.

Lord, give them strength;
Give them peace;
Give them hope...
And help them to be witnesses for you.

And this is our prayer for us also:
That You would give **us** strength
That You would give **us** peace;
That You would give **us** hope;

And that we would be encouraged,
Knowing that the Brotherhood across the world,
Are remaining true to You, under Your might hand.

And Lord, we pray, that we would be active witnesses
for You.

To the Lord our God,
be the dominion, forever and ever.
Amen.