



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Peter 5: 6-14

Fall 2024

"War"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Chris. Good morning.

We are in our last passage, the last lesson in 1 Peter. So turn with me to 1 Peter, chapter 5. We're going to look at verses 6 through 14;

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. ¹¹To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹²Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! ¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so *does* my son, Mark. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

1 Peter 5: 6-14

May the LORD bless this reading or His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for this time together. We thank You for Your goodness to us, and we're reminded of that in this great text of Scripture. This warning, and yet it is a passage of praise as well—for Your grace and Your mercy. We pray that as we study it, You will give us the wisdom we need to fight the good fight that is before us, the spiritual war we are in; to be aware of it, to be cautious of it—and yet aware even more so of Your grace, Your goodness to us, Your adequacy to supply all of our needs in every situation.

So bless us, LORD, build us up in the faith and encourage us, not only from the passage, but through the Spirit of God, Who is the Comforter.

And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) When America entered the Second World War, the first theater of conflict was North Africa. The Army was untested, but didn't lack confidence. It did lack caution—that's dangerous. Rick Atkinson, in his book *An Army at Dawn*, wrote that Allied troops, (American and British), moved toward the first great battle with Germany in "rollicking high spirits." They thought the expedition would be "a promenade", as he put it—an easy path to victory. He called that, "obligatory at the beginning of all military debacles."

And that's what it was; it was a complete rout. A journalist who spent weeks with the American army wrote that, "There were a lot of faults, but the greatest of them was a lack of appreciation of the possibilities of the enemy."

That applies to Christians. War is the subject of our passage, spiritual war. Peter warns, 'Be sober of spirit, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion.', (vs1). In other words, 'Be cautious, be humble; appreciate the enemy's possibilities or there will be a spiritual debacle.'

This is really a continuation of the previous passage on humility. The editors of *The New American Standard Bible*, made a new paragraph begin at verse 6, but there really is no break here. Peter began, "Therefore", which indicates that he was drawing a conclusion to what he had stated in verse 5; '...everyone is to clothe himself, or herself, with humility toward one another...', (now he addresses that to young men, but it applies to all of us)... 'for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Verse 6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time..."

Now that is the last thing people want to do. Our problems began because man didn't want to do that, didn't want to live in subjection to God in the garden. And ever since, man has been trying to throw off God's yoke: "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast their cords from us!", they say in Psalm 2, verse 3. That's mankind—that's the natural man.

But we're different. The believer in Jesus Christ is a child of God and has a new mind, a true understanding, and knows that God rules over us. His hand is on us and always for our good; and so we're to submit to that. We're to submit to Him, we are to bow to His providence, to His will for our lives, accepting what life brings, and entrusting ourselves, our concerns, to Him. That takes faith because it may mean that we are deprived in this life of something that we wanted, something that we worked for.

But the command has a great promise: He will "exalt you"! (vs6b). So, it's in our interest to be humble and to know that those who submit to Him, those who put themselves under Him and don't rebel against the disappointments of life, He blesses. He doesn't take anything from us that He doesn't repay abundantly.

As Matthew Henry counseled, "We are to be *diffident*, (meaning, 'reluctant toward', or, 'not trusting'), in our own judgment and confident in God's wisdom. We must", as he put it, "follow providence, and not force it." That's humility toward ourselves—and confidence in the LORD. We're not to despair; and God, in His time, will bless us beyond, and better than, we might have sought in our own wisdom.

Now, Peter didn't say when exaltation would occur—just that it will be, “at the proper time”, (ibid.), at God's time, the right time. And Peter didn't define the reversal of our situation, or the exaltation. It is probably different for different people: It may be a reversal of material fortunes and an increase in wealth—or an advancement in position.

Or it may be an elevation of fellowship in which, by trials, a person is drawn into a closer relationship with the LORD, and made to grow and become much more useful to His people. Whatever it is, it will be ‘best’, and we will marvel at the LORD's goodness, and wisdom, and power. But it requires humility—a modest view of self, and a lofty view of God. He is sovereign and good.

But still, having that attitude takes faith, because our natural tendency is to wonder, ‘What will happen to me? If I put others first, who will look after me?’ Now I think that's a good definition of what humility is...it's putting others first.

Well, it's a natural concern and a challenge to face in obedience. Peter answers it in verse 7. Now, this is not a new sentence, but it's a continuation of verse 6 to explain how to follow his instruction; and we might translate it, “...humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God by casting all your anxiety on Him.” Who will take care of you? God will; so cast all your anxiety on Him. I like the King James version here, "Casting all your cares upon Him; for He careth for you." Peter may have had Psalm 55, verse 22, in mind here; "Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you;..."

But it takes humility to do that—to realize we're not sufficient for the life that God has called us to live...but He is. And knowing that He does care for us, we believe that He will supply as we obey Him, trust Him; move out in faith and we'll see His hand.

Jesus spoke of this in Matthew chapter 6, verses 25 through 34, where He warned against worrying about the material possessions of life. We all do that; it's difficult not to. The Lord knew our situation—it's universal, it's always been the case from the beginning; and so He addressed it in a magnificent passage.

You're all familiar with it: People wonder, ‘What we will eat, and what we will drink, and how we will clothe ourselves’. And the Lord says, ‘That's the thinking of the

Gentiles; that's what they worry about. Worry doesn't solve anything. God feeds the birds who don't sow, or reap, or worry. The fields don't spin or weave, but He clothes them with grass and flowers. You're much more important than these, infinitely more important to Him than these. So He will provide. Trust Him. Seek His kingdom first.' That's what He said. (Mat 6:25-34).

Now, 'How do we do that?' Well, one way we do that is with humility of mind and humility of actions. You'll notice, again, back in verse 5, he says, "...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..." And so we're to behave with humility toward one another. The Corinthians had a difficulty with that. While that is the humility of action, they needed *humility of mind*, and so Paul addresses that problem that they had of exerting themselves over one another and thinking themselves superior.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7, Paul asks the rhetorical question, "For who regards you as superior?" (Well, they did!) "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you have not received? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (ibid.). Well, that's where *humility of mind* lays—that's it. And if that *humility of mind* exists, it will affect our relationship to one another. We must begin realizing who we are: We are debtors to mercy alone.

So what's the lesson? Strengthen your faith. Know God. Know all that He's done, and all that He's done for you. Know His Word. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" Romans 10, verse 17... and then walk by faith.

Now trusting in God, believing in His absolute sovereignty and His concern for us does not imply inaction. Really, just the opposite. Because He is concerned, and because He does provide, and because He is sovereign, we are to be active. And the sovereignty of God is a great incentive to action.

That's the next instruction, or exhortation, Peter gave in verse 8, where he warned the church of the ever present danger that it faced: "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the

alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (vs8).

This is still about humility. The American Army invited defeat in that first major battle of World War II because it underestimated the enemies ability. They were over confident. They lacked humility. —And Peter was warning against that here. We face a formidable foe—every day. We need to be sober, serious; we need to be alert; we need to be vigilant—and watchful always. The enemy is real and dangerous. Peter calls him “our adversary”, who is like a roaring lion, prowling around, looking for someone to eat, looking to make a meal out of you—and he's ravenous. It's a vivid picture—a symbol. Technically it's a simile, designed to clearly communicate the devil's power and vicious nature. He's a man eater. This word, “devour” was used of the fish that swallowed Jonah.

Peter identified the enemy as, “the devil”, a word that means ‘*slanderer*’, ‘*a false accuser*’, which not only defined Satan's activity but identifies him as a real personality. He's not a metaphor, or ‘symbol of evil’—he is real. He is a spirit—an intelligent, purposeful being who has malevolent intent. He is all darkness, no light at all; no sympathy, no speck of kindness in him. Revelation 12, verse 9, describes him as, “...the serpent of old...who deceives the world...”, and states, “...he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

That's still future, but it shows that he is the leader of an army of demons who follow his evil plan of deception of the world and attacks on the church. He's finite; he is limited in power. He cannot be everywhere; he can only be in one place at one time. But he has other beings under his command who act as his surrogates...and people who act as his agents. In Revelation chapter 2, verse 10, John warned the church of Smyrna, ‘not to fear’ what they were about to suffer: “...Behold,” he wrote, “the devil is about to cast some of you into prison...”.

So he works through human authority, as well as fallen angels; pagan governors and officers, ‘arms of the state’. It's not imaginative to see men like Nero and Stalin as

satanic. —The Third Reich rejected Christianity; and was heavily influenced by Nordic myths, paganism, and the occult.

In John 12, verse 31, Satan is called, "the ruler of this world."

In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 2, he is, "the prince of the power of the air."

Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, lists his minions: "...rulers...powers...the world forces of this darkness...the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

That's the apostle Paul. He clearly understood the existence of the devil and Satan's activity throughout this world. Probably, Peter's use of the word, "devil", is not only a reference to Satan personally, but also to this network of his—the agents that represent him and are so dangerous.

In his commentary, Wayne Grudem gave a survey of demonic influence from the New Testament that would indicate the demonic behavior today in people; and he illustrates it from the people that Jesus met. He cited Mark chapter 1, verse 24, where a possessed man in the synagogue, cried out against Lord. In Mark chapter 5, verse 2, there is the Gerasene demoniac, the man with a legion of demons—thousands of them. (It's amazing that that many demons could be in one person!)

These are examples of malicious opposition to Christ and the Gospel—bizarre and irrational behavior with violent and self-destructive behavior...and you see that in the man with legion. He lived among the tombs, screaming, cutting himself with stones, and attacking people. He was a terror to the region.

A few years ago I read a book, an interesting book titled *Madness and Civilization*, in which the author traced out the history of insanity, how it was understood, and how it has been treated. He began with 'demon possession', what he considered the earliest explanation of madness, (which he dismissed as primitive and superstitious). He ended with modern psychiatry—with Freud and then the use of medications. In his conclusion he wrote, "Much as psychiatry, and many of those who suffer from mental disorders might wish it otherwise, madness remains an enigma, a mystery we seemingly cannot solve." Not very hopeful.

Well, maybe 'demon possession' shouldn't be ruled out so easily. Now I would never suggest, and I don't want to give that impression, that this is the only explanation for mental disorders. And I don't think it's the only explanation in the New Testament or the Scriptures. —It's just that it is real, and it is true.

The devil is a destroyer. In John 8, verse 44, Jesus called him, "a murderer from the beginning". He believed in the devil—He knew Satan was real. But not all signs of the devil and demonic activity, demonic influence or possession, are bizarre. Jesus also called him, "a liar and a the father of lies." (ibid.).

He is the master of propaganda; so his presence and activity often occur under the veil of sophistication and enlightenment. In 2 Corinthians chapter 11, Paul wrote of, "...false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder...", he said, "...for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." (2Cor 11:13-14)—and he's behind all of that.

The Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, (the lawyers and priests), were hostile to Christ. They were religious men, 'Men of the Law', men of sophistication—many of them respected for their position. But Jesus told them that, 'their father was the devil.' (Jn 8:44). If you want to find Satan's agents, look for them in the pulpit; look for them in the lecture hall. They are purveyors of deceit, attacking God's revelation as foolish—criticizing its picture, (or revelation), of God as hurtful and intolerant. They undercut the truth.

But in the unseen world, the invisible, spiritual world, demons attack us with what Paul called in Ephesians 6, (vs16), "fiery darts" that may cause us physical harm, (you see that in the case of Job)—but certainly it's spiritual, mental harm.

Again, Wayne Grudem suggested that this might be, "The stubborn and unexplained onslaughts of emotions." Emotions like inordinate fear, hatred, depression, anxiety—which are all contrary to God's will. We should fear certain things; that's not improper—but inordinate fear, anxiety...that is.

A believer in Christ cannot be possessed by the devil or demons. I know there's some debate about that, (and missionaries have said that's not the case); but the Scriptures never give any example of a believer being possessed. And our hearts are 'sealed with the Holy Spirit'; twice Paul wrote that in the Book of Ephesians: Chapter 1, verse 13, and chapter 4, verse 30. We are "in Christ". Satan cannot be in Christ by being in us...but we can be attacked in these various ways.

So, what do we do? In Revelation chapter 2, verse 10, the Lord told the church of Smyrna, that the devil was about to throw some of them into prison. He said to them, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer..." So we're to be courageous; we're to go forward in faith; we're not to be ruled by fear. The devil is not omnipotent. God controls him, (He has the devil 'on a leash'). Here Peter tells the saints, "...resist him, firm in *your* faith..." (vs9).

I may have told you this story before. [If it was last week, then I'm in trouble; but I think I've told it before.] Back in 1980, my wife and I were on the island of Crete, exploring ancient Minoan ruins. At one site, I wanted to get a picture of the whole area. It was the palace of Knossos, which is sort of a famous ruin there, so I followed a dirt road up a mountain overlooking it. I had my camera around my neck, enjoying the spring day and the Mediterranean air, when I came around a corner at a farmhouse.

Suddenly, without warning, a dog, a big dog...a barking, snarling dog charged and leapt at me! I could feel his hot breath on my face. —It was, "The Hound of the Baskervilles"! *[Laughter]*.

I yelled; my camera went flying; and I thought, "This is it!", all happening in a moment...when just as suddenly he came to the end of his rope and dropped at my feet. *[Laughter]*. He got up, dazed; he shook his head and he walked back to his dog house. I felt my face, (it was there), and I continued on and took my pictures. And as unnerving as it was, as shocking as it was...I was actually safe as long as I stayed on the path I was on, (which was a foot farther than his rope's reach).

So it is with the devil. As we walk the paths of righteousness, what Jeremiah called, "the ancient paths", (Jer 18:15), where we're supposed to be following God's will, we cannot be in a safer place. And the LORD has 'the devil on His leash'—so don't fear him. Resist him—but resist him, "firm in your faith." (vs9). How do we do that?

Well, it's the way Jesus resisted him after his baptism when He was out in the desert for 40 days, and three times the devil tempted Him. Each time Jesus answered Satan with Scripture. Each Scripture, interestingly, was from the Book of Deuteronomy. [How familiar are you with the Book of Deuteronomy? It's a great book, an inspired book. We all need to know the Book of Deuteronomy, just as we need to know the book of John, the book of Romans, every book of the Bible. All 66.] But that's the book that He used.

And that is an example of humility. The Son of God, the creator of Lucifer—He, The Almighty, did not oppose the devil in His own authority as the Son of God, (as He might have done), but as a man, and opposed him in the authority of Scripture, God's Word. As a man, He dealt with this issue, this battle with the devil, and showed us how we, as individuals, as human beings, are to deal with him.

Only the humble of heart recognize that their sufficiency is not in themselves but in another, in the Lord God. And their authority is His inerrant Word; that's how we resist. That is being, "firm in your faith", by being well-grounded in Scripture. And if we are, then we will be able to face life's challenges. Like those five students I mentioned last week who went to the stake in Lyon, France, singing hymns, singing Psalms.

The Christian life is not a casual life. God calls us to battle. We are soldiers of the cross, and we face a fierce enemy—a beast, a fiend. But we can defeat him. James wrote, in James chapter 4, verse 7, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

This conflict is not unusual. That's the assurance that Peter gave in the rest of the verse where he wrote, "...that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished

by your brethren who are in the world." (vs9b). So, as Peter wrote in chapter 4, verse 12, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you ..."; this is not unusual; we should expect it and we should be preparing for it. But the suffering that results from the attacks of the devil will not last long, and will not end in disaster for us...but end for our good.

God uses them all for our sanctification, our strengthening; this is what Peter promised in verse 10: "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, *and* establish you." It's good to know that there is an end to conflict and pain...and that it is, "for a little while." (ibid.)

Major André was a British spy, captured during the Revolutionary War. He was a man of courage and character. Alexander Hamilton pleaded for mercy for him, but General Washington sentenced him to death. At the gallows André strengthened himself with the statement, "It will be but a momentary pang." He placed his neck in the noose, and died bravely.

Our suffering is not permanent. It will end. It may not be momentary; it may be prolonged. Still, our comfort is not that it ends, or is momentary, but what follows the end...what then *begins*! And ultimately, we have eternal glory—and soon. That's what God has called us to; that's our destiny which we should understand better and always be considering.

What is before us? Consider that: That should be on our mind and in our heart—that's the hope, that gives courage. And we, of all people, (and only we), have that great hope. "For...", Paul assured the Corinthians, "...momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." (2Cor 4:17). So, fight the good fight of faith.

As Peter ends, he gives a doxology:

"To Him *be* dominion forever and ever Amen." (vs11).

Well, God has that, He has "dominion". He will always have that; and in His time God's Son will return and He will reign upon the earth...and we with Him. We are the conquerors.

Peter ends the letter with a closing greeting in verses 12 through 14;

"Through Sylvanus, our faithful brother, (for so I regard *him*), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." (vs12).

"Sylvanus" is Silas, who was with Paul on his second missionary journey. It seems he was Peter's secretary, or amanuensis, who wrote down the letter as Peter dictated, (just as Tertius did for Paul when he wrote the Book of Romans).

Peter also summarized the letter with the words, "exhorting and testifying." (ibid). That's what he did throughout by giving moral instruction—and moral instruction based on doctrinal teaching. So, much doctrine in the first chapter and a half, and then moral teaching based on that—and it's all about grace. That's the great doctrine and theology that stands behind this book. The entire Christian life, from beginning to end, is about God's sovereign grace. He chose us from all eternity, called us out of death into life, and gives us strength daily.

That fact, that He chose us, is emphasized in verse 13 where Peter refers to, 'the chosen in Babylon'. This Book then, begins and ends on a reference to 'the chosen'. Divine election has been called a neglected doctrine. Peter didn't neglect it, as Paul and John didn't neglect it.

Our Lord didn't neglect it because it is true and foundational to understanding our relationship with God. It's a glorious and encouraging truth; that God would set His love on the unlovely, the undeserving—choose them out of a fallen race and sent His Son to die for them, redeem them, save them.

Well, that being the case, what won't He do for you, now that you're His child, that you're His son, that you are an heir of the world to come?! Peter marveled over that, and he emphasized it in his letter—begins it and ends it with that.

Verse 13 is a greeting from the church in the city where Peter wrote the letter. "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, Mark." (vs13).

Now, the question is, 'Is this "Babylon", the Babylon on the Euphrates, or Babylon on the Tiber River, (which is 'code' for Rome)? (And we considered that in our first lesson.)

But notice that Peter was not ministering there alone; Mark was with him, and he calls Mark, 'his son'. Now that is evidence of grace. Mark failed miserably on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. That was the reason Paul cut him from the team on the second missionary journey. But here he was serving with Peter. And Paul also requested his presence with him when he was in Rome during his imprisonment. "...for,..." he said, "...he is useful to me for service." (2Tim 4:11).

Like Peter, he failed—but like Peter, he was reinstated in service. Mark went on to have a very significant and long ministry for the saints, and for the apostles—a ministry for the LORD. God's grace restores the lapsed.

But something both Peter and Mark learned from their failure was humility which, again, is necessary for effective service and for fighting the good fight of faith against the devil.

Both Peter and Mark, especially Peter, failed in those early years because of over-confidence, a lack of appreciation of the enemy's power and cunning. But they learned, and returned to live wisely and well, just as that American army learned from its failure and gained humility, and went on, four years later, to defeat Hitler and his army—and that will be the case with the Lord's people and Satan.

Well Peter then gives a traditional conclusion to the letter; 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' (vs14). JB Phillips translated this, 'Give each other a handshake all around as a sign of love.' We might be a little more comfortable with that, but Peter meant something more personal—a kiss, indicating a genuine warm and loving relationship. And that's what it does signify. Today, I think we can probably express that Christian love with a handshake. There's a cultural difference here; but what's important is the reality of our love and commitment to the saints.

That should be true here; we are in a spiritual war together; we need each other and this bond of unity. No one can stand alone against our adversary the devil. We need the prayers and we need the support of the saints—we need to support one another.

Peter ends with a prayer. "Peace be to you all who are in Christ." (vs14b).

Only those who are "in Christ", joined in a personal union and relationship with the Son of God, can have that peace. Not only peace with God, (that's the basis of what he's saying here), but the peace of God...tranquility in life. Even in the "fiery ordeal" we can have that.

Why and how? It's supernatural...it's supernatural. That's what this life is. And again, that supernatural peace, and that supernatural calm is only for those joined to Christ by faith. A person can face hardship, even death stoically, (as Major André did), but then what? What comes after death? Not nothing—something: Either heaven or hell.

Only those who have put their faith in Christ as their God and Savior have the hope of heaven, have the hope of eternal life and knowing that God is our Father. He is sovereign and will bring us safely through—and into our heavenly eternal home.

If you desire that, then believe in Christ, who alone secured salvation for us and obtained God's forgiveness for everyone who believes in Him. And we have security in this life, regardless of the trials—security now and forever...forever in that kingdom to come.

(Closing prayer) Father we do glory in our Redeemer. We all confess that, "...there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). He's the Savior. We thank You for the salvation we have, and some day you will call us home, and we will rejoice in that.

Father, we thank You for the young people, and those who are going to be baptized this day and pray that You would bless that. We thank You for them, and thank You for the confession they have.

And now, the LORD bless and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)