

- I. The Biblical picture of suffering**
- II. The Biblical purposes of suffering**
- III. Biblical Responses to Suffering**
 - A. *Natural Human Response to Suffering***
 - B. *Supernatural, Godly response to suffering***
 - 1. Rejoice don't grumble**
 - 2. Trust don't doubt**
 - 3. Praise and give thanks don't complain**
 - 4. Connect with and Comfort Others**
 - 5. Pray**
 - 6. Persevere/Endure -- Don't Lose Heart**

7. Resist the Devil

This last response to suffering has to do with the suffering that comes directly or indirectly from the activity of Satan in the world and our individual lives. God details the Biblical response to Satan in three key passages contained in three books of the Bible written by three different authors; Peter, Paul, James. If anyone knew about the suffering Satan perpetuates on people it was them. This response is the final anchors and actions recorded by Peter in his letter intended to encourage those facing persecution and suffering in a broken and even hostile world. It has been awhile since we have reviewed the flow of Peter's argument so let's do a quick review.

- I. Realize your new heritage as specially chosen children of God 1:3-12**
- II. Live out your heritage as God's specially chosen children 1:13-5:11**
 - A. Live holy as Your Heavenly Father is holy 1:13-21**
 - B. Love fervently as Christ loved us. 1:22-25**
 - C. Long intently to grow by interaction with the word of God. 2:1-3**
 - D. Come continually to Jesus for placement as stones in His temple 2:4-10**
 - E. Abstain completely from the destructive passions of the flesh 2:11**
 - F. Practice godly behavior in an ungodly world 2:12**
 - G. Practice godly behavior under persecution for doing right 3:13-18**
 - H. Saved by Baptism 3:19-22**
 - I. Live godly against the enticement of the flesh 4:1-6**
 - J. Prepare for Persecution 4:7-11**
 - K. Celebrate Suffering 4:12-19**
 - L. Live in humility 5:1-7**
 - 1. Elders serve willingly and eagerly 5:1-4**
 - 2. Followers humbly submit to elders 5:5a**
 - 3. Everyone humbly submit to one another 5:5b**
 - 4. Everyone humbly submit to God 5:6-7**
- M. Recognize and Resist the Devil**

Peter knew first-hand the suffering as a result of Satan's attacks. He allowed Satan to use him to challenge Jesus.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, "Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!" But He turned and told Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me because you're not thinking about God's concerns, but man's." Matthew 16:22-23

That was only the beginning, later he allowed Satan to fill him with fear to the point of denying Jesus.

“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 22:31-32

We should listen to what Peter has to say about guarding against the devil’s work in our life. Paul, who also knew something of the suffering perpetuated by Satan, told the Corinthians this.

But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

Today, I don’t think we are able to confidently assert a lack of ignorance. Many today, ARE ignorant of the schemes of Satan either by design or default. It seems to continually be a contentious subject in Christian circles. Satan is happy with complete ignorance or unrestrained overemphasis. It is my desire not to error in either of these. Both Paul and Peter strongly call us not to be ignorant but sober and alert. I have taught a series on spiritual warfare at least twice since I’ve been here at Chico. In thinking about what I should do with this passage in light of previous teaching, I have decided at least for now, to take just two Sundays focusing on this passage in Peter and incorporating Paul’s passage in Ephesians 6.

In addition to that, for those interested, I will offer an interactive Saturday seminar in the near future on spiritual warfare.

Many years ago, when God first forced me to face the activity of Satan in the lives of people on a practical basis, there was not a whole lot of material written to bring guidance. Today there a number of well-balanced treatments of the subject.

The admonition concerning Satan comes at the end of an extended list of other actions related to living godly in and ungodly world.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

James exhorted his readers to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand before trying to resist the devil. *But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:6-7*

After Peter’s exhortation to be properly aligned to God, he urged his readers to be alert to the intent of Satan to derail or devour Christians.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 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. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:5-11

Peter, in this passage, provides three ANCHORS and prescribes three ACTIONS.

- 1. The devil prowls around seeking someone to devour.**
- 2. This struggle is common to all Christians world-wide.**
- 3. God will eventually perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.**

In light of these three truths, do these three things **ACTIONS**.

- 1. Be of sober spirit**
- 2. Be on the alert**

3. Resist the devil

1. The devil prowls around seeking someone to devour.

Here are a few observations from the text.

- **The devil is our adversary.**

Scripture attaches many different names to Satan and his band of sorry soldiers

Serpent, prince of the Power of the air, devil, Satan, Lucifer, demons, evil spirits, angel of light, fallen angels.

Devil means “slanderer, false accuser” Satan also means accuser. Peter calls him “your adversary”. The term adversary relates to a court room where we are being formerly opposed. It also applies to a hostile neighbor fighting against us.

Satan **NEVER** has our interest in mind. The Bible refers to him as an enemy of God and mankind. The Bible talks about the Devil and his angels.

Character

Spirit beings – invisible

Personality traits

Fallen angels are spirit beings having individual personality. Each one has mind, will, emotion.

Thoroughly and irreversibly corrupt.

There are varying levels of wickedness even within the demon realm.

Powerful beyond the natural

Self-deceived

Fallen angels are NOT:

Self-existent but created

Sovereign but under authority

Omnipotent or invincible but limited

Omniscient but highly intelligent and networked

Omnipresent but numerous

The activity of Satan and his evil minions appears all through the New Testament.

One cannot escape the myriad of examples of Satan’s activity. They manifest from slight to severe. Jesus identified the cause of a godly woman’s long term skeletal affliction as the work of a demon and brought healing through casting out the demon. Jesus encountered the unrestrainable crazy man running around in the tombs. Leaving him clothed and in his right mind through casing out a legion of demons. Demonic affliction was not uncommon or undiagnosed in Jesus day.

People came to him with the right diagnosis but had no means of deliverance.

The unfortunate translation of the Greek term by demon-possessed clouds the issue. The term should actually be translated “demonized” or “under the influence of a demon” or “had a demon.” If you ask me if a Christian can be “demon-possessed” I would categorically and unequivocally say, “NO!” Those bought by Christ are owned by Christ. Satan cannot usurp His ownership. Jesus said no one can pluck them out of my Father’s hand. However, individuals can willfully or ignorantly grant access to the members of their body by destructive choices. The greater the surrender, the more formidable the stronghold. I will have more to say as we go along and definitely more detail in the workshop.

- **The Devil continually prowls around like a roaring lion.**

Peter uses a lion metaphor to illustrate the level of influence Satan can wield.

He is fierce, ruthless, cruel, and powerful. A roaring lion, while rarely roaring while hunting, will roar to announce territory. He will roar to intimidate. Roars are not only used to proclaim territory but also to rally straying members of the pride. Roars also announce and celebrate a kill.

The Devil is a roaring lion because he makes noise about his territory. He rallies his other predators. He celebrates those he has devoured. The Devil carries out a perpetual hunt for unsuspecting victims. Peter warns us not to be unsuspecting or unaware but alert.

- **The devil is out to incapacitate or destroy.**

He is continually on the move in search of prey. He moves in search of prey he can “drink down” or “swallow”. Given the action Peter calls for it seems he is searching those not sober or alert. Peter was such a prey. He was “sifted like wheat” because he was blinded by his own pride. Ever seen a threshing machine?

The Lord's slave must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading [them] to the knowledge of the truth. Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Some assume the devil does not directly bother Christians. Since Satan is not everywhere at one time, I agree that Satan probably has bigger fish to fry or prey to swallow, but that does not mean he doesn't have a well-organized “pride” to do his dirty work and hunting.

We cannot escape the gravity of this and other warnings regarding the devil. What makes us vulnerable to capture or becoming lunch? Are there those he can't just “drink down”? What protects us from his prowling. Judas was an easy prey who Satan himself entered. Is this some metaphorical battle or do we face unseen but real forces? Paul seems clear. We must be alert and spiritually prepared because...

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. Ephesians 6:12

Paul used a term indicating close encounter. Paul wrote this to followers of Jesus.

I first came to the reality of this battle after teaching on Ephesians 6 more than thirty years ago. What drew me to change my thinking concerning the reality of spiritual warfare was the emphasis on alertness, sobriety, need for armor, and the categorical declaration that our battle in life isn't primarily against human power but demonic powers.

If there was only a remote possibility of demonic influence, then why all the dire warnings to be aware and alert? What happens if I am not alert? What happens if I do not put on the armor? What happens if due to my failure to be alert and resist become a meal for the devil.

- **The devil has a far reach**

He hunts unsuspecting believers (prey). Peter indicates this is a world-wide hunting ground.

2. This struggle is common to all Christians world-wide.

knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. 1 Peter 5:9

Anytime you find a “knowing” linked to some action it is intended to be an anchor that enables or inspires action. This action which we will explore next week can be carried out with the knowledge that we are not alone in the struggle. We are not the only ones experiencing it. In fact, Peter indicates it is a world-wide war. It is not unbelievers who are suffering this concentrated devil attack but believers. Peter characterized this stalking by Satan as “suffering”. Peter used same word he used to describe the pain of living in a fallen world,

suffering persecution for Christ's sake. Along with the painful persecution of people and distressing circumstances of life in a broken world and demanding passions of our own flesh, we face the stress of Satan's search for an unsuspecting prey.

3. God will eventually perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

The final anchor provided by Peter in our fight against the enemy has to do with the confidence in God's ultimate work in our life of growth and protection.

But 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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:10-11

The contrast is between world-wide suffering among believers and God's ultimate victory in Christ.

In contrast to present suffering God promises future victory and glory. Paul told the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Peter affirmed that God actively participates in our suffering and battle. Just as in other life trials and suffering, God uses even our battle with Satan to do a work in our life. No amount of armor is useful if we are too weak to stand up. God's strengthening is vital.

Here, Peter indicates God allows periods of suffering. He wrote "after you have suffered". I assume that after we have suffered the necessary amount of wrestling God accomplishes an inner work. In the first chapter, Peter wrote about "suffering if necessary". Yes, it is necessary.

Notice who promises. The God of ALL grace HIMSELF. God deals with us in ALL grace. He desires to bless. The God who called you (in the past) to His own glory in Christ Jesus. This theme of glory following suffering runs all through the Bible. What does God promise to do in the future so that we do not need to fear resisting the Devil today?

God will Himself...

PERFECT

The Greek term is "used of reconciling factions, setting broken bones, putting a dislocated limb into place, mending nets in Classical Greek of refitting a ship or setting a bone"

properly, exactly fit (adjust) to make in good working order, i.e. adjusted exactly to function best.

God uses whatever struggle to do a work in our life. He is the God of restoration and mending for His use.

He allowed a demon to afflict Paul to keep a lid on his pride.

So that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself. 2 Corinthians 12:7

Whatever needs refitting or adjusting God promises to do. Sometimes He uses suffering to do it. Peter became a tool of strengthening others after his "sifting". One translation "God will see that all is well again."

The next three are translated as adjectives in some translations when they are all active verbs related to God's action on our behalf.

CONFIRM

This term means to “make stand, support, secure, stabilize establish”. This is important to know when a “roaring lion” stalks us in order to destabilize us and even destroy us. God Himself stabilizes us and enables us to survive Satan’s stalking. Jesus promises to pray for Peter that his faith would not fail. Jesus prayed Peter would become stabilized after his Satanic sifting ordeal.

STRENGTHEN

The Greek term means to be "strengthened to overpower". It is also used in classical Greek for an overpowering stream that will not be stopped from finishing its course. It is used of animals overcoming their opposition – using their horns as instruments of overcoming strength. Jesus used the same word concerning Peter’s ministry to his brethren. God promised to empower us to overcome the enemy.

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 1 John 2:14

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. Revelation 12:11

ESTABLISH

This term is only used here and refers to laying a foundation. Whereas the first term related to remaining steady in unsteady circumstance, this establishment indicates a permanent firm foundation on which to build. *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work (laid a good foundation) in you will bring it to completion (keep you steady) at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6*

These are your anchors related to spiritual warfare.

1. **The devil prowls around seeking someone to devour.**
2. **This struggle is common to all Christians world-wide.**
3. **God will eventually perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.**

Next week we will explore the **ACTIONS** Peter requires in light of the **ANCHORS**.

1. **Be of sober spirit**
2. **Be on the alert**
3. **Resist the devil**