

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 11/30/08
Hope in Anxiety **1 Peter 5: 1-11**

Peter, as he begins to end this letter to the churches that are scattered all around the world, speaks from his heart once again. He writes as *"...your fellow elder, a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and sharer in the future glory of God..."* That is our greatest hope. Peter knows what it is to suffer for Christ, in the mental, verbal, physical and spiritual realms. He has been caught in wrong thinking, speaking to soon, physically torn up inside and out, and even had Jesus tell Satan to get out of him and behind Jesus!

Now Peter is appealing to "fellow-leaders", those who are scattered because of great persecution, but who have an even greater hope. He is saying that even some of those who were not leaders now need to step up and become leaders. Those who are leaders must lead, because that is their calling from God. Those who have that leadership calling must not shirk away from it because times are hard, but must eagerly serve, not for fame or fortune but as loving servants who are willing to set an example.

There is a reward for the faithful but we don't receive it until Jesus returns.

There is a lot that can be said about these few verses, but most of it is caught, not taught. And it should come from leaders who are in the process of learning how to lead. It should come with a degree of humility, as we shall see but also with the authority of Jesus in the lives of the leaders.

When I first started out in ministry, I had so many new, exciting ideas, that I wanted to use to advance the kingdom of God in a small church in a small community to which we had been called. It was an agricultural area, which is such a big switch for a city boy. As a matter of fact, one of the former leaders of the church started calling me "the city-slicker from Chicago".

I decided one year to video tape the Christmas program so that everyone could sit together and watch it. It went fairly well, but there was this one scene that did not come off as I had hoped it would. When I tried to get the shepherds close to a flock of sheep, all of the sheep took off running, and we never did get close to them. I even tried taking authority over the dominion of the earth, but to no avail! A leader can't chase sheep, they have to learn to trust him, then they will follow him.

The way that the leader submits to God is the way that the young men are to submit to those who are older. This seems to be just common courtesy, yet the next phrase puts it all in perspective: *"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..."* The Word of God is to all believers, to clothe ourselves with humility. This is a rare word in the Bible "egkomosasthe" it refers to a slave putting on an apron before serving those over him. Much like Jesus did in **John 13: 4-7**.

Since the verse is about humility, and seeing that it quotes from **Proverbs 3:34** which tells us that the grace of God takes care of those who are submissive, and we are reminded of **James 4:6** which states that God opposes the proud. All of the verbs are present tense, which carry with them a timeless character, and stress that we are to carry on these activities constantly before men, in the name of Jesus.

For the believer, our real submission even when it is toward another person, is to God's mighty hand. In the Old Testament, submission to God's hand meant two things: discipline and deliverance. Both of these meanings will stir the hearts of the Christians in Asia, who are suffering for being followers of Jesus. And true to his nature, Peter ties his encouragement to be humble to the view that Jesus will be returning soon. *"...in due time,..."* is the time that Jesus again appears on this earth, so everything that we go through is ordained by God and for his glory, whether good or bad.

Verse 7 is the heart of this passage, *"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* The verb "to cast" shows a decisive act on our part. What is really interesting is that Peter does not define what is making the believer anxious, he does not even mention what he has in mind. All believers who want to live a godly life, in a fallen world, will have difficulties.

The fact that Peter says "God cares for us" means that God is not indifferent to the sufferings that we go through. The fact that God sent His one and only Son to this earth to die in our place shows that God is a caring God. Add to that the teaching of Jesus about His heavenly Father having a deep concern for His children, and we can see why God cares.

But knowing that God cares, is not an excuse for us to sit back and do nothing. Peter warns the flock of the danger of making God's care and love an excuse for inactivity. We are to be self-controlled and alert, to all the schemes of the evil one, especially being lulled into doing nothing because God is so nice and loving. The devil looks for those who do nothing, and

devours them. He doesn't eat them, just makes them his own, by causing them to live in such inactivity that they draw no attention to their Father who cares so much. All around us people are dying to know that someone cares.

Other people had already undergone the same types of suffering that the Asian Christians are going through now, any follower of Jesus will go through trials and suffering. But we are to resist the devil and his desire to get us to do nothing and say nothing about our Jesus.

John tells us the best way to do this, this is the John who was exiled to the island of Patmos, away from other believers. He writes to all believers *"They overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony;..."* (Revelation 12: 11).

Peter closes this letter with a strong message to the believer who will stand strong in the face of persecution, he calls on us to understand and trust God's absolute amazing grace, which will not only get us through the present sufferings, which in light of eternity are so small, but he gives us hope in all our anxiety.

Peter gives us four verbs that emphatically promise that God will be there to help us. God himself will "restore us", or make us complete. He will "make you strong"—strong in the face of persecution. He will "make you firm". He gives us stability in the face of persecution, and he will "make us steadfast" he gives us the firm foundation that we need to live in Him and for Him. Our task is to recognize that His power lives in us, but it belongs to Him, now and forever.

He is our hope in anxious times.