

February 13, 2022

Transformed

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith..."

I Peter 5:6-9

Whenever we are studying Scripture, we need to realize that repeated words are a major guide to the concepts being identified. Like most of the New Testament authors, Peter likes to use the same words over and over again to drive home his points. In this first letter he uses a number of terms repeatedly.

He begins by addressing this letter to the ***"strangers in the world"*** and more than once he will tell us to live as ***"strangers"***. This world holds way too much attraction for us and we can easily be enticed by what it offers causing us to lose focus, I think, on the things that really matter.

Again, in his introduction he refers to those ***"who have been chosen"*** and again he will repeat this idea teaching us that we are ***"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God"***. As believers we have been chosen to bring praise and glory to God in the way we live which demands that we live outside and away from the things of this world.

Another word that the Apostle repeats over and over is the word ***"submit"***. As believers he calls on us to give up our innate tendency to rebel and to choose submission to authority in both the world and more especially to God's authority. Submitting to the will of God will always be a major challenge for our rebellious spirits.

Another term that Peter repeatedly uses is ***"suffering"*** drawing the contrast between suffering the consequences for our own poor choices as opposed to suffering for the sake of Christ. It is, I think, a mistake to understand suffering as only and always physical pain. We can and do, I believe, suffer when we see a world so consistently reject Jesus and the grace that God gives us through him. When we see so many rebelling against the basics of Jesus' teachings and practicing evil of every kind we suffer disappointment and the more personal that rejection and rebellion, the more intense that suffering.

Finally, Peter will call on us to be ***"humble under God's mighty hand."*** He challenges us to surrender our cares and anxieties to the God who will ultimately lift us up. In the end the Apostle is teaching us, I think, to trust in the God of heaven and not in the things of this world.



In the life of a true believer being self-controlled will always be essential to our very survival. When we understand that Satan is constantly ***"looking for someone to devour"*** we have to come to understand that a single careless thought or action can lay us open to spiritual destruction. As those who literally exist in a constant battle, a few careless moments when we drop our guard can be eternally deadly.

In the end God will restore us and make us ***"strong, firm and steadfast"***. Peter, we need to remember, is always writing as one who has been felled by Satan's attack. He is the one who denied Jesus and he knows what it is like to face the reality of his own failure to be steadfast. Peter is, also, the one Jesus chose to open the doors. Peter knows failure, but he also knows the joy of restoration.

In the end he will tell us, in Scripture, every word matters.

