

With this passage Peter concludes the main part of his letter to the scattered, suffering believers, pilgrims and aliens on a inhospitable earth and in a hostile world. A world under the domination of the devil. A world promised to the Lord Jesus. A world that had rejected and crucified the Lowly One, who is in reality the Lord of glory. He is now biding His time, so to speak, awaiting His exaltation and we with Him. For we who have been bought with His blood shed on the cross will inherit with Him. While we anticipate exaltation we do not seek it now without Him. It is sure, but in due time. A time is set but, as Son of Man, even the Lord does not know the day or the hour, Matthew 24:36. Meanwhile, He was lowly and suffered hardship, rejection and worse. We do too. (Are we?) So we are to humble ourselves. We humbly place ourselves under the Mighty Hand of God. Gladly. What a place to be. No one can pluck us out of His mighty hand, John 10:28-29. No one can reach in under His mighty hand and harm us. Therefore any suffering we experience is said to be "according to the will of God," 4:19. And we know that it is for our good and the glory of God. (He even turns the suffering we deserve due to our misdeeds to good, Rom. 8:28).

But there is the adversary whom God allows to have sway on this earth for a while yet. Satan often uses wiles as a serpent to deceive and defeat believers, but here Peter characterizes him as a lion. He is said to be walking about as a roaring lion seeking a victim to devour. A roaring lion is obviously fearlessly proclaiming his ownership of his territory, challenging all comers who might seek to invade and take over. And he is not viewed here as stealthily prowling about seeking a good meal as members of the cat family, large or small, are wont to do. Satan is openly persecuting saints. Why? Because the Lord is "spoiling" Satan. Through the gospel we bring He takes those who are Satan's dupes and slaves and frees them to serve a new Master. Believers are sent to live for God in the earth, the light of the world exposing it for what it is. The civilization man has established to satisfy his needs and lusts apart from his Creator God does not attract the believer taken up with Christ. The faithful saints on earth represent a threat to Satan's continued domination and his competition with his Creator for men's allegiance and reverence. So he aggressively attacks the faithful. This is the side of Satan Peter exposes for us here. We are to resist him in faith, knowing that the same afflictions we might suffer have been and are experienced by our brethren elsewhere worldwide. The resistance depicted here is not aggressive but an alert, steadfast, solid stand against an attacker. Satan cannot conquer those who do not flee, fight or fold. Historically, Satan's persecution, even to killing the saints, has never succeeded in destroying the faith or deterring the spread of the gospel.

The Acts, chapters 7 and 8, documents this in the faithful last stand and stoning of Stephen. So we note that God's mission for us does not include attacking Satan head on in violent acts against those serving him or attempting to unseat the worldly powers that seem to be under his control. Paul speaks to that in 2Corinthians 10:3-5. For example, bombing abortion clinics, The Crusades against infidels in other nations, election campaigns against lawmakers that promote homosexuality are not on Peter's agenda for believers in the world. We are to stand! Stand against evil rather than attack it. Satan is the attacker, the roaring lion in charge. Our mission is bringing the gospel to lost sinners, teaching the truth of deliverance from the power of sin, and holding the truth of the assembly. We are to stand for the truth, for that is Satan's greatest foe. Paul equips us with weapons of defense for this, 2Corinthians 6:7, Ephesians 6:10-18 and 1Thessalonians 5:8. Put them on and use them. Our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit. Use it!

The suffering of saints at the hands of men is neither prevented or alleviated. We are not instructed here to even pray for that. Rather we are told it will end after we have suffered "a while." Peter instead pronounces a blessing on the sufferers. This suffering will have very desirable results in us. God will make us perfect (complete, restored together). He will establish us (set firmly in the right direction). He will strengthen us. He will settle (ground) us. Solid, positive blessing results from hardship, pain, sorrow, rejection, injustice and persecution. Peter experienced these. No wonder he leads us in glorifying and blessing God, giving Him glory and dominion for ever and ever. AMEN! Obviously in one sense we can't give God dominion. He is God! He is Sovereign! He does what He pleases. But how blessed and refreshing to Him when we, as His created and redeemed beings, voluntarily give Him glory and submit to His dominion. Satan didn't do that nor do his followers. Note that among all the forms of suffering Peter mentions in this letter, illness and death due to disease are not named. Other scriptures encourage prayer and visiting those who are ill and sorrowing but Peter's focus seems to be upon the suffering at the hands of men or, at the most, as pilgrims and aliens on earth. Many believers on earth today are indeed suffering as did the saints Peter wrote to.

Are we? Why not?

*John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

By Ron Canner, March 9, 2005