

DIFFERENT SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:15 *If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

The Bible says a lot about suffering. Peter makes it a theme of his letters, because of the imminent persecution of the early church. But it is possible to assume that God's blessing upon those who suffer, will apply to Christians whatever the cause. Peter now addresses this misunderstanding. Although we will feel the pain of persecution, we should also feel the pain of our own wrongdoing - the natural consequence of going against God's will. However, sometimes it is not easy to distinguish between the antagonism caused because the character of Christ in us is offensive, or because we are simply in the wrong or even socially inept.

Clearly criminal behaviour is our fault (assuming that a country has not criminalised good Christian discipleship). We should not think that we are being persecuted for righteousness, when we have been unrighteous. However Peter's mention of meddling in other people's affairs may seem an unusual rebuke. However it matches the instructions not to gossip (look at the references in [Proverbs 11:13](#), [16:28](#), [20:19](#), [26:20](#), [26:22](#); [Romans 1:29](#); [2 Corinthians 12:20](#), [1 Timothy 5:13](#); [3 John 10](#)). Gossip is a way of interfering in the lives of others; as is any authority that is wrongly taken over other people. Their resentment may not be righteous, but the social effect will be to disrupt relationship; and that always brings pain.

So we need to be careful. At a personal level we are primarily responsible for ourselves. If we are leaders we have a certain amount of authority over others but we must not abuse our position in marriage (cf [Eph 5:33](#)); with children (cf [Eph 6:4](#)); with employers (cf [Eph 5:5-8](#)); with employees (cf [Eph 6:9](#)), with older people (cf [1 Peter 5:5](#)) or in the church (cf [1 Peter 5:2-3](#)). Of course, some will claim abuse where legitimate and Godly authority has been exercised, but more often the problem lies in the wrongful interference in other lives. It is even more obvious where people assert their own authority, yet are betrayed by their character (cf [2 Tim 3:1-9](#)). We must, therefore, be constantly watchful of ourselves. No wonder Paul says in [1 Cor. 10:12](#), "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Thank you for your promise of blessing to all who are persecuted for the sake of Christ. But thank You too for this warning not to assume that wrong is righteous, simply because people turn against me. Help me to have an honest opinion of my character and lifestyle, and if I am wrong, please show me. Help me to be at peace with all, if it is possible; and help me to exercise leadership and citizenship responsibility in a way that will build up others, and glorify You. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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PAIN WITHOUT SHAME

1 Peter 4:16 *However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Physical pain is intended to be very helpful. It is a way of telling us that something is wrong and a remedy is needed. But in many diseases, pain can play tricks on us - either failing to give the right signal, or giving the wrong ones. In this corrupted world, even moral pain can be manipulated by Satan. Sometimes, we get into trouble for doing what is right; from those who are resisting Jesus (even if they do not realise what they are doing!). The devil then deceives the believer's sensitive conscience, by suggesting that the reason for their pain is that they are in the wrong.

That wounded conscience will almost always feel some sort of shame: that is Satan's intention. The pain of shame usually drives us to hide away and to try to undo what has led us there. Satan encourages that, so that we pull back from the front line of Christian witness, and even apologise to others for upsetting them, when all we have done is to obey the Lord. So you can see how necessary Peter's instruction was at the time, as well as now, to keep those who follow Jesus, active in public as well as private witness. The Apostle Paul tackles this head on at least 15 times including [2 Tim 1:12](#), "*That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*"

The antidote to shame, is the confidence of knowing that you have God's approval. You will only find that in the Bible; which is why Christians without regular good Bible teaching become a prey for the Enemy. When you know that your life and witness agree with what the Bible says, then you can dismiss the lying temptations of Satan. He wants you to stop following Jesus. On the other hand, the Lord has chosen you to receive His grace and to administer His grace to others - for their blessing and His glory. And that should happen most, where you spend most of your time - at work!

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for allowing me to bear the Name of Jesus, as I follow Him. When others despise me because of You, please encourage me not to feel defeated - but rather glad that the character of Christ has been recognised in me. Teach me from Your Word, the things that please You, so that I will not feel ashamed, nor be put off my commitment to follow Jesus and to serve others in His Name. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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JUST THE BEGINNING

1 Peter 4:17-18 *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

People say that God is love and will never harm His children. That is true. But in the same way that a truly loving father will discipline his children, our loving God disciplines us. However unpleasant persecution may be, it is used by God to refine His people and strengthen those who want to trust Him more. So, for the devoted believer, persecution enables faith to grow. The sad reality is that without problems, we would be inclined to live in our own strength and not by faith in the Lord.

[Hebrews 12:4-13](#) explains this judgement/discipline process. God is determined to get us right for heaven, and that we should be strong to witness to His grace until we get there. But if the pain of persecution is a sign of God's determination to purify His people, what about those who are determined to resist him? Peter says that Christians who endure persecution and purify themselves for God's holy service, are also living out a message from God: to the rest of the church, their suffering shows the urgency to win the lost; and to the lost the message is, if God treats His own people in this way, what about those who refuse to submit to Jesus.

God's determination to "*redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good*" ([Titus 2:14](#)), knows no bounds. He has done everything necessary in Christ so that we may receive His grace. Now, He continues to use even the hatred of the wicked for His purpose: sanctification for us and the announcement of judgement for the ungodly. It is the Lord's desire, and should be ours, that sinners will turn and receive salvation, so that they will not be overtaken by God's judgement (cf [2 Peter 3:9](#)). Therefore, be strong to accept the Lord's discipline: as you do so the church will be made bolder; and the demons will quake, knowing that sinners will see the grace of Christ in you, and will turn to receive His salvation.

Prayer: *Loving Father. Although your discipline is hard at times, thank you for using the circumstances of my life to encourage me to purify myself before You. As hard times come (because of my love for You), may my example encourage the church to greater faith, and provide an opportunity for other people to see the grace of Christ - that they might repent and receive Your salvation. In Jesus' Name. Amen*

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SIMPLY TRUSTING

1 Peter 4:19 *So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

What do you do when you cannot do anything? The Bible gives one answer, simply trust in the Lord. Indeed this advice is also very helpful when there are many possible courses of action, when our human flesh incites us to take action to mitigate the problem, before the Lord has given any instructions. Suffering makes us, initially, want to rise up above it; but Peter says, don't ... put yourself under the Lord.

The Lord who has made you, and has always watched over you; will never take His eye off you, or abandon you to your enemies. Those who put themselves under Him are being very wise. In the 'shadow of his wings' (cf [Ps 57:1](#)), there is ultimate security. He makes Himself responsible for us, and there is nothing we need to do except stay close to Him. But like the chicks which sense danger, have to choose to run under the adult's wing for safety; so we have to decide that we will find refuge in no other person or place than the Lord. All alternative strategies will end in disaster.

The sound of the enemy's attack needs a disciplined response (although it may be designed to create maximum confusion). Peter says that panic is avoided (with all its potential to 'do something' and get in a worse mess) by declaring the sovereignty of God in the circumstances, and allowing Him to defend us ... and while He is protecting us we should quietly get on with doing what is right and good. The coolness of this approach may surprise those who are trying to frighten us, but it also demonstrates that we believe that God is in control. Even in the workplace, this will produce a humble confidence which is a wonderful witness to God's grace.

Prayer: *Almighty God. Please forgive me for so many self-centred ways in which I have tried to protect myself instead of committing myself into Your very capable hands and loving care. Forgive me when I have substituted other people or money or my own wisdom or energy, instead of relying on Your power. And also, when You have asked me to work with you, forgive me for being slow to obey because I was frightened. Help me to Commit myself to You today and trust you to keep watch, while I get on with life in simple obedience. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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LEADERSHIP TEMPTATIONS

1 Peter 5:1 *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Every leader with human motivations will use their authority to do a number of things: to achieve the purpose of the appointment, to fulfil personal ambition, to devise ways of combating problems, to gather a group of supporters, to gain personal benefit and to ensure that the office is held as long as the person wants to remain. However, all this can be done without any Divine help, simply by the energy and wisdom of the flesh. You see it in politics, in business, in the professions and, alas, too often in the church. Peter now advises church leaders to have a different viewpoint.

Firstly the time framework is much longer. Elders should know that their work starts in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross; and the work (which is still His work, although delegated to elders) will not be completed until He comes back again in glorious majesty, to lead all His people in an eternity of glory. Secondly, the work is not according to the wisdom of the elders, but the wisdom of God in planning that grace and peace shall come only through Jesus Christ (cf [1 Peter 1:2](#)). Thirdly, their work is not to bear witness to their own labours, but to the work of Christ in His passion, and to His work of preparing a people who will share in His glory.

So this verse leaves no room for the leader wanting to grow a personal ego, nor for the multiple personal agendas that bedevil many churches. Indeed, it is the leaders' work to ensure that the cross-to-crown agenda of the Lord Jesus stays in pole position. Leaders are there to dethrone alternative priorities, and personal passions (which is why they become targets for attack); leadership is to prepare the church to share in Christ's glory. Interestingly, many Christians think they practise their faith by church involvement; but the Bible is clear that leaders are to prepare God's people for acts of service (cf [Eph 4:11-13](#)) - and so good church leadership will be demonstrated by confident believers in the workplace, as well as humbly serving within the fellowship.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank you for setting a different agenda for church leaders, one that spans from the cross to the glory of Christ. Please help every church leader, who exercises authority in the name of Jesus, to serve in the Spirit and not in the flesh. May they delight that Christ shall be honoured, even when they are not; and may they skilfully equip the believers to serve as well in the world and workplace, as in the church - until Jesus comes again in Glory. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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LEADERSHIP DIVERSIONS

1 Peter 5:2-3 *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

It is not easy to be a leader, in any field. Although this passage refers to spiritual leadership in the church, the principles also apply in the professions, business, academia and in the family. Indeed, it is amazing to see how modern books on leadership, management and parenting advocate a return to Christian ethics (even if they are not described as such, nor their Biblical origin recognised). Shakespeare was a good observer; he wrote, "Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them" (Twelfth Night Act III Scene I). The key question, though, is how do we deal with the challenge?

Christians accept that God is the ultimate authority and that humans merely have delegated authority. In the church, the flock are God's sheep and not the Pastors' - they serve as 'foremen' but not owners. Those who have 'greatness thrust upon them' can either resent their role, or value it as a privileged appointment from God Himself. Spiritual leadership that is resentful is out of order with God. Leaders must not be 'in it for what they can get out of it', but eager to give everything they can (even if they get little in return). Those who calculate their ministry by the money or benefits they receive are hardly fit to be the Lord's servants.

The potential to misuse God's delegated authority to get personal power, is seen in churches as well as businesses, in charities as well as banking. Jesus was different; He demonstrated servant-leadership. He laid down His own life so that others might live. [Phil 2:1-13](#) graphically draws the parallel between Jesus and those who claim to follow Him. Where the church is led by those who live like that, it grows to God's glory. Such people are not weak, but they have chosen to place their strength at the Lord's disposal. Yes, leadership will always be lonely; but if we are willingly submitting to the Lord, we will never be alone.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for reminding me that no human being has ultimate authority. I pray for my leaders that they may serve in a Christ-like way; and where I have responsibility for people, help me to willingly accept the privilege You have given to me. May I not exceed the authority you give me, nor serve You in a calculating way, but as an example to others; following the example of Jesus. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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LONG TERM BENEFITS

1 Peter 5:4 *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Peter has just told church leaders not to serve with reluctance, or being greedy for money or power ([1 Peter 5:2-3](#)). Such behaviour is the way of the world, inspired by Satan's lies and is unprofitable to God's kingdom. Instead, [1 Peter 5:1](#) says that suffering is the inevitable pattern for Christ-like leadership; yet there is a wonderful reward, a share in the glory of God.

However closely we seek to follow Jesus, the Bible recognises that devotion and duty alone will not sustain the leader who is weary or staggering under the pain of unjust suffering. We also need the assurance that the Lord sees everything and knows how to reward His faithful servants. Peter started his letter with the promise of an unfading inheritance reserved for those who stay true to Christ (cf [1 Peter 1:3-9](#)), and now he reminds the church leaders that they have an unfading crown of glory awaiting them.

The Lord knows how much leaders need that encouragement. They suffer in many different ways and may often be tempted to retreat to the side-lines of ministry (or even leave the field of battle): this word is for them. Keep on pressing on! That was also Paul's testimony and exhortation (cf [Phil 3:12-14](#)). Every church member should also take special care to encourage their leaders rather than criticise. If God is preparing a crown for them, surely they are worthy of respect. It was the same for Jesus, but the cross always comes before the crown; and it will be so for us too. But the great news is that the Chief Shepherd is coming, and will award His crowns. With such certainty, don't give up ... but press on to receive His reward!

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for every encouragement that you give to me, and to the leaders of my local church, to press on - in the certain hope of sharing in Your glory. Thank You for knowing how much I need the incentive of Your Word to sustain me; to keep me from falling away, or dodging my responsibility of serving You. Help me to look beyond the trials and pain which come because I am faithful to You, as I eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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THE SPIRITUAL CHAIN OF HUMILITY

1 Peter 5:5 *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

In the same way that church leaders must accept the authority of the Lord Jesus (cf [1 Peter 5:2-4](#)), younger men should submit to the leaders. Young and energetic men often feel an urge to steal power from their elders: but that is a fleshly impulse, encouraged by the Evil One. Those who are truly spiritual will want to accept the authority that God has placed over them.

The same applies to everybody in the church; there is no virtue in proud assertions or self-seeking. Those who claim to serve the Servant King should want to serve others in the fellowship; to lift them up and to seek their good. Peter saw the trail of pride over the early churches, threatening to destroy the immature fellowships; and alas it is too common a sight today also. The way of the world is to crush the weak. But the way of the cross is to raise the weak by self-sacrificial service.

The principle extends beyond the church to every area of life: God opposes the proud, wherever! It is true in the workshop and the ship; the hair salon and the airport. God's opposition to arrogance does not stop at the church door. His anger is roused by pride on the building site and in the board room, as well as the home and the hospital. But, by contrast, He pours out His grace on all who humbly accept the authority He has placed over them. Test Him out: change your attitude to authority and see how much blessing and grace He will shower upon you.

Prayer: *Almighty God. Forgive me for my vain self-assertion, and every action that is motivated by pride. Help me to see how offensive this is to You. May I reconsider my attitude at work and home, as well as in the church, so that You will be glorified and that I can be blessed as you pour out Your grace into my life. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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TRANSFORMATION IN GOD'S TIME

1 Peter 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Every follower of Jesus is commanded to dismiss pride and embrace humility. In this chapter alone (cf [1 Peter 5:1-5](#)), Peter has given five reasons: Jesus was humble; we are saved to serve; God opposes proud people; God give grace to humble people; Jesus is bringing His reward to humble people. In today's verse, Peter stresses that true humility does not come by an externally applied, enforced submission; it has to be a voluntary personal choice which leads to willing lifestyle changes in line with God's Word.

The command, 'humble yourself', demands immediate, proactive decisions; a change of personal attitude and a glad acceptance of the role of a servant of Jesus Christ. Although humility has many applications, the key to this verse is 'under God's mighty hand'. However many people want us to serve them, our first responsibility must be to accept God's authority over us. When we do so, every other demand can be evaluated by the priorities which His Word reveals: and that is the only sensible way to get life in perspective. But also, it is only God who can lift us up; giving us the honour which He has chosen for us.

But when will that happen? In God's time! We have our human ideas of service and reward (and business management manuals are full of them); but only God knows how and when to reward His faithful servants. He knows the right interval between sacrifice and recognition; the cross and the crown. He fully understands that giving great rewards too early, may make us proud, and eager to accept the glory which should go to Him. On the other hand He is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love (cf [Heb 6:10](#)). So, true believers go forward, trusting God's promise: that He will honour those who humble themselves under His authority, confident that He knows just the right time to use His hand of power for our blessing.

Prayer: *Almighty God. You know all things! Thank You for understanding the way I think and feel, and everything that will motivate me to serve You. Help me to choose to humble myself, and to accept the path You have set for me; trusting that you will not desert or disappoint me. Help me to keep trusting even when You do not lift me up; knowing that You will bring Your honour and blessing when the right time comes. For Your glory's sake, Amen.*

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

1 Peter 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Have you noticed all the training resources in 'soft management skills'. At considerable cost, businesses are teaching their staff: people matter more than things; that how you do things matters as much as what you do; how to handle other people's aggression; and how to prevent internal stress from crippling the individual and the business. All good stuff (mostly!), but hardly original. Jesus demonstrated how to do it all perfectly and the Bible has been training the followers of Jesus to live like Him for 2000 years. It is simply normal Christian discipleship.

Today's verse, reminds us that anxiety affects Christians. Even the Apostle Paul admitted to ministering in weakness and fear (cf [1 Cor 2:3](#)): it is a part of our human frailty, our internal corruption and the destructive potential of the world in which we live. But the Christian is commanded to handle it differently. Yes, some people have an easier temperament than others, whether they are Christians or not: but without the certain knowledge of a loving caring Heavenly Father, they have no other resource except themselves. However, the born-again believer is never alone, and has the massive benefit of being able to give all fears and worries to the Lord.

Salvation that comes by Jesus Christ, is not to make us nicer, but to transform our hearts - the very place where fear wants to roost like a vulture. A new confidence comes, not through psychological tricks but simply by knowing that we are loved, and cared for, by God. A teenager once told me, "It is a privilege to be loved by somebody as special as God!" This Christian certainty comes from the objective evidence of the Scriptures and the subjective assurance by the Holy Spirit (cf [Rom 8:15](#), [Gal 4:6](#)). But this knowledge needs to be used! If He cares, and He certainly does, then entrust your fears (many of which are lies from Satan to destabilise us) onto the Lord. The verse says every anxiety, not just some, should be deposited with God. Trust Him to resolve the issues behind your anxieties, and then you can get on with your service for Him, unhindered and joyful.

Prayer: *Faithful God. Thank You for this invitation to transfer all my anxieties to You, so that You take the responsibility of dealing with them. Help me to keep trusting that you will work in power, to dismiss Satan's lies from my mind and to deal with people and circumstances, so that You will be glorified and that I will know Your blessing. For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.*

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ON WATCH

1 Peter 5:8 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Recently, I have heard people using a seaman's expression, "It happened on my watch". It refers to a time when it was their duty to notice what was going on, and take the appropriate action. Peter urges us to be 'on watch' all the time. Most car accidents happen, not by deliberately reckless driving, but by a lapse of concentration or a moment of inattention. That is also the most common way in which followers of Jesus fall into the devil's trap. They do not set out to be wicked; they just take their eye off the road of holiness. Peter says that we have a spiritual duty to be on the look-out for the opportunities where Satan may try to destroy our relationship with the Lord; and take action to ensure that does not happen.

Satan is always on patrol, like an enemy submarine beneath the shipping lanes of life; or like a lion in the savannah of Africa. From the time of Abraham to the Early Church, lions were common in the Middle East and are referred to in 154 verses of the Bible. This verse talks about a lion that roars: but as you may know, lions who are stalking their prey move silently until they are about to pounce. When they roar, it is to flush the quarry from the undergrowth, frighten the nervous or immature animals into rash movement; or to scatter a herd in order to separate an individual animal from the relative safety of the herd. Likewise, Satan does most of his evil tempting in the silence of darkness. But he also will 'roar' to scare us into unwise action, and to try to separate us from our fellow believers.

The isolated Christian is easy prey for the Evil One. Therefore the regular discipline of meeting with others for worship, fellowship and Bible teaching is essential to help us keep strong in the Lord. The teaching of God's Word helps us learn how to distinguish the devil's lies from God's truth. Every Christian needs to be aware that Satan may try to attack us at any time; and so we must be self-controlled and spiritually watchful. Of course, as Jesus said, watching and praying go together (cf [Matt 26:41](#)). So, because our fleshly nature is so weak, we cannot afford a moment's self-indulgence, lest our fleshly hunger becomes the invitation for Satan's assault. Stay 'on watch', and pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to be self-controlled.

Prayer: *Loving Lord. Thank You for this reminder that I do not live in a morally neutral world, where I can be spiritually careless, and unintentionally invite the devil's attack. Help me to be resolved to watch and pray, staying close to You and to the fellowship of my Christian brothers and sisters. For Jesus' sake, Amen.*

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NO ENTRY FOR EVIL

1 Peter 5:9 *Resist him [the devil], standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Bullies can be found everywhere, from the school playground to the workplace. They achieve their wicked purposes by inducing fear, and expect people to cower away humiliated. Facing up to a bully is the best way to make him or her back down. The threats and whispers which surround these people, and their sycophantic entourage, demand that people of courage should expose them. It is the same problem with the devil. The more he exercises spiritual terrorism with lies and threats, the more he thinks that he can get away with it.

Peter now recommends resistance. Refuse to accept Satan's lies: they do not contain anything you need to act upon, or be frightened by. But we can only resist the devil if we are secure in Jesus who is far greater than Satan; in the same way that Jesus was not fazed by His wilderness encounter with him, because of the utter confidence that He was loved and appointed by his Heavenly Father. 'Standing firm in the faith' does not mean being perfect, but being confident of the love, mercy and grace of the Lord, as described in the Bible. And don't forget that God has provided you with all the armour you need - as long as you stand and face down the bullying lies of Satan (cf [Eph 6:10-20](#)).

But it also helps to know that you are not the only one who is a target of Satan. Today, more people around the world are being persecuted because they believe in Jesus than ever before. So be encouraged that you are not alone - many others around the world today also consider it worthwhile to stand up for Jesus. But you may also need the encouragement that it is right to resist the powers of darkness; that is why Peter is writing. We resist by refusing to accept his lies as truth, and by challenging erroneous thoughts with God's Word. As we praise God we refuse to honour Satan; and as we obey God we dethrone the devil. Dare to resist Satan. After all your 'big brother' is Jesus, and He is the only person Satan will run away from!

Prayer: *Lord of power and might. Thank you for Your help as we stand firm in the face of the attacks of the devil. Strengthen us to dare to resist his taunts, attacks and sweet temptations. I also pray for my brothers and sisters around the world to be suffering today because they love Jesus. Please sustain them in their need and may their example encourage me to stand firm for you and against Satan. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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SAFE ARRIVAL

1 Peter 5:10-11 *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Human nature loves to feel in command. It is the fleshly delusion that we can determine the security and prosperity of our future, by controlling today's circumstances. Of course, we are given a proper responsibility to make wise decisions each day, because they will affect what happens tomorrow: but the future is never in our hands, but God's (cf [Ps 31:14-15](#)). Peter has been encouraging his readers, to submit to God and to each other in loving service, and to resist the devil - despite the inevitability of suffering. But suffering is not the end: God, who has called us to glory, will ensure that our journey ends securely in His presence.

And along the way, He will give us windows onto the glory to come. Every time He lifts the scourge of suffering, and new strength returns to refresh the battle-weary; every time we receive faith to overcome and to hold our ground with confidence - these are all God's encouragements that the glory, He has promised, will come; with its fullness of love, joy and peace. But it is only by God's power that this can happen: and God is determined to exercise His power on behalf of His children so that it will happen!

Peter is in full agreement with what the Holy Spirit is urging him to write. That is why he puts, "Amen" at the end. It means, 'it is true' or 'I agree', and has uses in the sense of 'let it happen', or in more modern Western slang, 'bring it on!' If we cannot say 'Amen', or if we do not want God to exercise His power like that, (to bring us through and establish us in His kingdom), then something is wrong. Perhaps we have not yet submitted to His grace (see www.crosscheck.org.uk), or we may have become back-sliders, or have been serving the Lord in the flesh and not the Spirit. If that is so, we must ask for mercy and seek His grace to be re-established as faithful soldiers and servants. When we do, we can be fully confident that, "*He who has begun a good work in us, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*" ([Phil 1:6](#)). Amen?

Prayer: *Gracious God. Thank You for calling me to share in Your glory. Even though I cannot control my destiny, I know that You do. Even though I experience suffering, I thank You for every encouragement along the way, when I see glimpses of Your great power. Thank You that you are determined to use your power to bring me through to Your presence. So, help me to be glad, and actively work with You despite suffering, because I am confident that you will fulfil every promise over me to Your praise and glory. In Jesus Christ's Name. Amen.*

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ON A STEADY COURSE

1 Peter 5:12 *With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Why are some Christians stable and productive, but others are uncertain and confused? Either we base our life on lies, fleshly energy and human wisdom or on truth, grace and God's Word: one leads to confusion, the other to confidence. Peter now summarises the purpose of his letter: to encourage stability based on truth, freedom based on God's grace and perseverance encouraged by the apostle's teaching.

Even the apostles needed to be part of Christ's church and not aloof from fellowship. Silas has been a faithful companion and 'armour bearer' (cf [1 Sam 14:6-7](#)) to Paul, and now to Peter. Both valued the gracious and courageous fellowship of this man, who probably wrote as Peter dictated the letter. Even the most powerful of God's servants is weak without the encouragement of Godly fellowship. The faithfulness of Silas was not just personal loyalty (although that is an essential part of any ministry team), but he could be trusted to fully participate in the gospel work, because he also trusted the faithfulness of God to him.

Encouragement is very important. This letter has already explained how easily Satan can discourage us; we don't need any more from the church, or the silence of indifferent Christians! We love to cheer on athletes to do their best: so let us encourage others to stand firm for Jesus, and urge one another to live in a way that glorifies Him. Even if encouragement is unusual in your culture, be radical and find a good reason to spur on your brothers and sisters in Christ to love and good deeds (cf [Heb 10:24](#)). It is not easy to follow Jesus, particularly in the workplace or where people are hostile to you because of your faith; so we need the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and other believers. And they need you! Seek them out; and build them up by your example, prayers and teaching.

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Thank You for not leaving me alone, because You have given me Your Spirit, Your Word and Your family to encourage me. Help me to play my part in the life of the church by being pro-active to encourage others, including those who are leaders and teachers themselves, by loyal and humble service and gracious words of affirmation. For Your Name's sake. Amen.*

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ENCOURAGING BELIEVERS

1 Peter 5:13-14 *She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Peter now concludes his 1st letter writing from Rome, which he calls Babylon. The Bible identifies Babylon as both a real place, and as a symbol of evil (cf [Rev 17:1-6](#)). Babylon (in what is now, Iraq) had a proud and powerful reputation for oppressing and secularising the people of God; its society allowed all that God forbids. Rome's culture had also degenerated to allow every kind of moral evil - like many capital cities around the world today. Yet, people in Rome first trusted in Jesus after hearing the gospel from travelling believers - and that is still happening wherever people are courageous to tell others ... wherever they may move on business. Although they were persecuted, they wanted to join in Peter's encouragement to the churches in, what is now Turkey.

Mark wanted to encourage them too. Now, he had been a great disappointment to Paul in ministry. Although a cousin of Barnabas, Mark did not have the personal qualities to endure the rigours of Paul's missionary itinerary, and was dropped from the team. Even though Barnabas tried him on an easier ministry schedule, it was not his gifting. However, when he got alongside Peter in Rome, he proved to be the wonderfully clear writer of Mark's Gospel. Peter clearly greatly valued Mark's humble teachability, and called him his 'son'. That should remind us that, whatever our assumptions about other Christians, it is God's right to equip and use His people as He chooses.

Although Rome prided itself on establishing peace, the Great Fire of Rome in AD64 was wrongly blamed, by Emperor Nero, on the Christians. The vicious persecution of the church forced them to meet in underground catacombs, and many fled the country - including those to whom Peter was writing. But despite all their suffering, they learnt to find peace of heart through trusting in Christ. Even today, wherever believers are oppressed, they speak of knowing God's peace, despite the external threats, as they commit themselves to the Lord Jesus. Whenever you meet believers - encourage them; and whenever you hear of persecution - pray for them. I am sure Peter did.

Prayer: *Dear Father God. Thank you for the abilities You have given to me, so that I might serve You. Although I live in a morally dark world, may I dare to shine the light of Christ into the darkness around me; by the way I live, and how I speak of Jesus. May I live in the peace you have provided for me, through Jesus, and help me to encourage those whose suffering is painful. I now pray that you will sustain, guide and comfort all those who are being persecuted today, for Your sake. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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