

Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity, Part 3

1 Peter 5:8-14

60-50

Tonight as we come to our sacred time, really, in the Word of God, a time when the Spirit of God speaks directly through revelation to us, as we learn His Word and as we endeavor to elucidate its meaning, it's our prayer that the Spirit of God may ennoble us even to more faithful fulfillment of the task to which we have been called. And I know that was on Peter's heart as he wrote to the dear saints who were the recipients of his letter.

We're looking then tonight at 1 Peter chapter 5, our last look in this epistle. The section before us actually began in verse 5 and concludes at the end in verse 14. In this our third study of these verses, we've used the title, "Fundamental Attitudes for Spiritual Maturity."

As we begin, let me just say to you by way of a general observation that we live in a time when there is a prevailing mindlessness in the church. We could consider the church as today having a spirit of anti-intellectualism, and I don't mean that in an academic way, I mean that in a spiritual way, in a biblical way. The church has in many ways fallen victim to the New Age Movement. The New Age Movement is nothing more than a newly clad form of Hindu mysticism. If you know anything about Hindus, you know they believe in everything and they believe in nothing. They are characterized as mystics in the sense that they make no distinction between fantasy and reality. The natural and the supernatural blend into some kind of blur. That characterizes the New Age Movement, which is an anti-intellectual movement. It's an anti-content movement that wants only to speak about experiences and mystical experiences at that, that knows little difference between what is real and what is fantasy.

To give you a perspective of how this has found its way into the church today in a broader kind of consideration, we could look first of all at the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church is deeply involved in mysticism. If you were to attend a mass, you would find yourself caught up in a very mystical kind of ritual, a mechanical kind of anti-intellectual series of movements and motions and ceremonies and activities. The product of that sort of mystical ceremony is to produce in you some kind of feeling rather than to impart to you some kind of truth. Mystical ceremony has replaced intelligent worship. Scripture becomes completely subservient to form and ceremony.

In liberal Protestantism you have much of the same. They have emphasized another kind of anti-intellectualism. They call it sometimes "the leap of faith." They speak about God as if He were some transcendent being that we through some mystical experience can touch. Another product of their social orientation or their anti-intellectual perspective is a political kind of anti-intellectualism. When you no longer know the content of truth, when you no longer know what is right or wrong, when you no longer believe the Bible as liberals do not, then all you're left with is experience and experience finds its way into social life and social issues and therefore into political concerns. If you are wearied with trying to agree on a non-authoritative scripture, if you are weary of trying to find truth without a

standard, you wind up in a sort of mystical kind of religious experience that eventually descends into social action and little more.

Not only is the Roman Catholic Church involved in mysticism and the liberal Protestant church but today the Charismatic Movement is probably the most obvious purveyor of subjectivism, the most obvious seller of mysticism. It promotes, in my judgment, an experiential anti-intellectualism also. It is the product of a weak theology and the product of an incompetent handling of the Word of God. The bottom line is you have people looking for experience. That experience knows little or no biblical definition.

These kinds of things have produced a sort of mindless Christianity that is in fact the antithesis of everything that God has designed for His church. God never intended that His people would somehow connect up with Him or worship Him without the use of their minds and without basing that relationship upon a very clear and precise understanding of truth. In Psalm 32 verse 8 the Scripture says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go. I will counsel you with My eye upon you." Then He says this, "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding."

There is no virtue in not understanding. There is no virtue in a lack of information. There is no premium on not knowing. In Psalm 73 and verse 22 the psalmist writes, "When my heart was embittered I was senseless and ignorant and I was like a beast before You." Senselessness and ignorance before God is considered to be that which is characteristic of an animal, not a man. In the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 1 and verse 18, you remember these familiar words, "Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord." In Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 22 we read these words, "Words of condemnation for My people are foolish, they know Me not, they are stupid children and they have no understanding." In Hosea the prophet says in chapter 4 what would sum up a very important truism, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." God has never put a premium on mindlessness, just the opposite, just the opposite.

Turn for a moment to Philippians chapter 1 and let me remind you of some verses there. Verse 9 says, "And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Going through that backwards, we are to be filled with the fruit of righteousness so that we may be sincere and blameless. To do that, we must approve the things that are excellent and to approve the things that are excellent, we must have real knowledge and all discernment.

In 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 5, Peter writes, "Now for this very reason also applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence and in your moral excellence, knowledge, knowledge."

Beloved, I just say this by way of reminder. We are called to know. We are called to use our minds, to understand the truth of the revelation of God. Not to engage ourselves in experience as that which determines truth, not to be caught up in mysticism, but that is ever becoming the mode of operation of the church today. That is why you see the blurring together of Catholicism, liberalism, charismaticism because it is all predicated on the same kind of mystical approach which wants to bypass the mind to feel God. The late Rufus Jones wrote, quote: "Whenever I go to church I feel like unscrewing my head and placing it under the pew in front of me because I never have any use for anything above my collar button," end quote.

We're not here to make you feel, we are here to make you think because proper action and proper response comes with proper understanding. Christianity is a matter of the mind. Do I need to remind you how the Bible describes the mind of the sinner, the mind of the unregenerate, the mind of the one without God? In Romans 1:28 it says he has a depraved mind. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 it says he has a blinded mind. In Ephesians 4:17 he has a futile mind, or an empty mind, or a useless mind. In Colossians 1:21 he has an alienated mind, that is. it is alienated from God.

You might even sum it up in the words of Paul to the Romans in chapter 8 verses 5 and following. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so."

So the unregenerate man has a depraved mind, a blind mind, a futile mind, an alienated mind that can be summed up as a mind of the flesh. He can't think properly. He cannot understand the things of God. They're foolishness to him. But on the other hand, the New Testament tells us about the mind of the believer. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 16 it says, "But you have the mind of Christ," a Christ-like mind. In Romans 12:1 and 2 it says we have a renewed mind. In 2 Timothy 1:7 it says God has given us a sound mind. And so we are able to think on things that are virtuous, things that are pure, things that are noble, things that are good.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 5 Paul says, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Your thoughts must be captive to obey Christ. And wherein has Christ revealed His will but in the Scripture. And so as our minds are filled with divine truth, as that filling of the mind with divine truth becomes woven into the fabric of our lives, then that begins to control our conduct. William James said, quote, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes," end quote. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A man is what he thinks." And the Scripture says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

Beloved, the purpose of preaching and the purpose of teaching is to pour truth into your mind, to pour it in your mind in a persuasive way, to pour it into your mind in a convicting way, to pour it into your mind in a clear and precise and definitive way. That is its purpose. So that truth continually poured into your mind somehow becomes part of you as the food which you eat becomes part of the body and the life and the energy by which you live, so does the truth. It is the goal of the preacher and the teacher to give you truth, which translates into strength, translates into action, translates into beauty, translates into usefulness. That's why we're here.

And what that truth poured into you does is create attitudes. It finally becomes so mixed with your thought patterns that it begins to generate attitudes and those attitudes control your behavior. And if you have a mindless Christianity and if you do not hear precise, clear truth from the Word of God brought to you persuasively, then you will not have a clear mind and you will not have the truth that translates into action, translates into attitude. And so it's crucial that you expose yourself to truth. And what I do on Sunday morning and Sunday night and what I do with most of my life is impart truth to people so that once received in its clarity and in its impact, it begins to cultivate attitudes.

As a footnote to that let me say that is why you must continually be exposed to truth because on the other hand you are being continually exposed to error, continually. And you must put yourself under the sound hearing of the Word of God often, in order that the fabric of your life might be strengthened by the truth.

Now, receiving truth cultivates proper attitudes. As Peter closes out this epistle of truth, he reminds all of us what those proper attitudes are. It's a simple formula, receive truth. As truth begins to take over your thinking patterns it creates attitudes. Those attitudes become just a part of the expression of your personality. They become almost involuntarily the way you respond and they dictate how you act. So Peter here is talking about attitudes and he gives us at the last part of this wonderful, little epistle a list of fundamental attitudes for spiritual maturity. This is what the preacher wants to produce. This is what the teacher wants to produce. This is what the truth wants to effect in you in terms of attitudes.

The first one we noted in verse 5 was an attitude of submission. "You younger men likewise be subject to your elders." The second one we noted was an attitude of humility. He says in verse 5, "We are to be clothed with humility." Verse 6, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." The attitude, of course, of submission attacks self-promoting pride which is what the world would like you to have as an attitude. The attitude of humility attacks self-love which is what the world is selling and even the church today. The third attitude is in verse 7, an attitude of trust, where you cast all your anxiety upon God because He cares for you and you trust that care, an attitude of trust. That attacks doubt. That attacks self-independence; the call to trust God as the one who cares and has the power to do something about it.

Fourthly, we noted an attitude of self-control in verse 8. Be of sober mind or be of sober spirit really means be self-controlled. This calls for a well-disciplined life, self-restraint, discipline of the heart and the mind against the intoxicating allurements of the world. Self-control is really mind control. So, the attitude of submission, humility, trust, and self-control.

Fifthly, and this is where we left off. Peter says you must develop an attitude of vigilance or vigilant defense. Verse 8: "Your adversary," well first of all, "Be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." You have to have an attitude of vigilant defense.

Now how do you get that attitude? By learning about Satan, by learning about your weakness, by learning about spiritual truth, by learning about the armor of God, by learning principles of Scripture to apply against temptation; all of those things equip you with an attitude of vigilant defense. That's why I say, as the truth is poured into you, as it's poured into you it becomes that which generates your attitudes.

Now the enemy is powerful and the enemy is subtle. The enemy seeks to devastate those who claim to belong to Jesus Christ. He goes around seeking whom he may devour. And just because you can cast your care on him in verse 7, doesn't mean you're careless in your own life and it doesn't mean you are indulgent. However, I believe, and I want to stop at this point and digress as I've been doing on this particular point for at least a few minutes, I believe the church has entered into a mindlessness at this point that is very, very threatening.

When it comes to our adversary, the devil, and his strategy, there is so much fantasy now in the church and so much ridiculous superstition and so much mindlessness that the church has become very, very vulnerable to Satan. A recent article in the *L.A. Times* pointed it out. Dateline, Pasadena, California: "Under the militant banner of spiritual warfare, a growing number of evangelical and charismatic Christian leaders are preparing broad assaults on what they call the cosmic powers of darkness. Fascinated with the notion that Satan commands a hierarchy of territorial demons, some mission agencies and big church pastors are devising strategies for breaking the strongholds of those evil spirits alleged to be controlling cities and countries."

May I just slip in as a footnote, if this is not the greatest exercise of a...of a twisted Christian ego, it's close to it. To imagine that a group of men can meet in Pasadena and plan a strategy to assault the powers of darkness, is a slight over statement of their capability.

The article goes on to say, "Some fledglings in the movement already claim focused prayer meetings ended the curse of the Bermuda Triangle. Some of these prayer meetings led to the 1985 downfall of the guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. And other focused prayer meetings produced a two-week drop in crime and freeway traffic in Los Angeles." The writer says, "This is not the story line for a second sequel to *Ghostbusters*, but the developing scenario does have a fictional influence. Interest in spiritual warfare has been heightened by two novels that have become best sellers in Christian bookstores, *This Present Darkness*, by Frank Peretti, which describes the religious fight against territorial spirits mobilized to dominate a small town and a second Peretti novel has a similar premise. Fuller Seminary professor C. Peter Wagner has written extensively on the subject, led a so-called summit meeting on cosmic-level spiritual warfare earlier this month in Pasadena. Two dozen men and women took part, including a Texas couple who head a group called Generals of Intercession and an Oregon man who conducts spiritual warfare boot camps. In his opening remarks, Wagner said, 'The Holy Spirit is saying something to churches through these Peretti books even though they are fiction. People are reading these books that would never read our books.' Then he says, 'If you do not know what you are doing and few have the necessary expertise, Satan will eat you for breakfast.'"

What he is saying is that if you don't learn the techniques of spiritual warfare being taught, Satan is going to eat you for breakfast. You know, you want to back up and say to these people, "Do you really think that you have any capability to deal with Satan at all? And if you would say, no, really we don't, then you're left with a very simple solution, and that is to trust God to deal with him."

I'm very concerned about this because I think it is communicating a very, very misleading message. And while there may be enjoyable reading in those books and I don't want to fault all that's in them by any means, there are many things that are fantasy. For example, in those books it seems to make the holy angels glorified human beings. One even laughs with a quote "spiteful laugh." That... That wouldn't be right for a holy angel to do that. They even come in various human races. The books seem to confuse demons with the flesh and leads people to believe that all their sins are attributable to some demon that's doing it. These demons have names that reflect the deeds of the flesh. And this information, by the way, comes not from Scripture but from supposed encounters with demons in demon interviews.

Now are we going to believe the demons? Are we going to have a demon interview and believe what they tell us? If they're getting their strategies out of a demon interview, that's really frightening. That is really frightening. Some of them are saying, "Well, we had an interview with a demon and this is

what they said so this is how we're going to deal with them." Furthermore, the view of prayer in the book seems to make holy angels dependent on Christians' prayers rather than on God's power. The impression is that God is not in complete control and if we're going to get this thing in control and defeat Satan and all his demons, we've got to get our warfare strategy down pat. And the heroes in this whole deal are victorious Christians, not God.

The thing that concerns me is when you mingle this fantasy with reality you're simply playing into the mindless kind of Christianity that is typically mystical, rather than biblical clarity. You say, "Well, how are we to understand this matter of spiritual warfare?" Well, you're going to have to get some of these past messages because I don't want to go all over it. But we already went into that. We looked already in Revelation chapter 12, didn't we? And we looked at the matter of who participates in spiritual warfare, what is the strategy of spiritual warfare, what is the program of spiritual warfare, how does it function, how does it operate, how does it work. Now we come down to just a few things to tie that together, all right?

What is the... What is the general approach of the demons? How do they... How do they attack? Well first of all, Satan and his demons attack us as individuals. You say, "Can you tell when a demon is attacking you?" Not necessarily, I certainly can't tell, I can't see them, I can't feel them. And the Bible doesn't say anything about that except that we wrestle against them. In some way they are closely involved in some combat with us. Although they are indistinguishable to us for the most part, there are occasions when they manifest themselves. But they will attack us primarily through the system, through the alluring world system. They can't read our minds. Nor is there any indication in Scripture that there's some means by which they can have access to plant thoughts in our mind. I don't find that in the Bible. But they can attack us through the system's enticement of our flesh. So they do attack us as individuals through the system around us.

Now we don't know all of the ways in which they can do that. I do believe that if they are given access into a believer's life that they then have some means by which they can affect that believer's thinking process. Else why would Peter have said: "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" when he said it to Ananias and Sapphira. But I don't believe in a righteous Christian's life they have that access. In an obedient Christian's life I don't believe they have that opening. But somehow they can come and influence us through the system and if we're open to them and living in disobedience, they have some access to the controlling factors of our conduct.

The second thing that they do is they attack families. They attack families. This is very clear in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 Paul tells us in verse 3, "Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife," that's talking about physically, sexually, "and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife doesn't have authority over her own body but the husband does, likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body but his wife does." In other words, you need to give your body to your partner. Why? Verse 5: "Stop depriving one another unless it's by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Nothing would make Satan happier than to come against a Christian couple and because one is holding back the physical relationship against the other, raise the level of temptation to that one struggling with self-control and destroy that family. And again, he can do that through the environment, through controlling the environment that person is in so they are unduly exposed to wicked temptation. And if there's an opening in the life and disobedience, there is reason to think that he can somehow push the buttons even within us.

Third thing he wants to do is attack leaders, leaders in the church. That is why the apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy chapter 3, "You have to have men that are qualified for ministry," because at the end of verse 7 he says, "so that they may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." I think the devil sets traps for people in spiritual leadership.

And then fourthly, he attacks the church. And his goal is to destroy its unity, its power, to confuse its purpose. You read the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 and see how Satan moved in, how the synagogue of Satan invaded and destroyed and devastated a church's testimony. Second Corinthians chapter 11 reminds us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. And what's that to do? He disguises himself as a Christian. He disguises his emissaries as those who purvey Christian truth through hypocritical liars that appear to be teachers of the truth.

So, Satan comes at individuals, comes at families, he comes at leaders, he comes at churches, apart from all the rest of the stuff that he's doing in the world. But that's the focus of his attack on us. Now the question that I want to answer very briefly now is: How do we deal with it? Do we have to go to a seminar? Do we have to attend the boot camp? Do we have to go to the Generals of Intercession and find out how they battle demons? Do we have to plan a cosmic warfare strategy? Or get eaten by the devil for lunch, or breakfast, or dinner? What do we do? Let's go back to our text and find out.

What Peter says is so simple and so direct. You've got a very serious situation, you better be on the alert, he says in verse 8. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. That is a serious issue, a very serious issue. What are we going to do about it, Lord? How we going to prevent this? Somebody says, "I know, we have to... We have to bind him." Oh? What do you mean bind him? "Well we have to tie him up." How you going to do that? "Well you say these words, they tell us, 'Satan, I bind you.'" You hear them say that? And are we to believe that as soon as somebody says that he goes, "Oop! That did it. Boy, now I'm stuck"?

We might even want to ask how long a binding lasts. We might even want to ask: Is he only bound in regard to me or does that bind him in regard to everybody? And if it could bind him in regard to everybody, then why doesn't one of us just once and for all say, "Satan, you're bound for everybody for good"? That would just end it all.

What in the world are we talking about? The people running around binding demons, what does that mean? In what way can you bind a demon? Listen, sin came into the human race because Satan deceived whom? Eve. Would you say that we are more susceptible to deception than Eve? Yes. That's why in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul says, "I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity in Christ." There is simplicity, there is purity in Christ, and you move away from that and you are in trouble.

Do you realize there are people in Matthew 7 who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not cast out demons in Your name?" And He says to them what? "I never knew you." Who are you?" Now Satan will be bound but there's only one person who can do that. In Revelation 20 says, "I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the keys of the abyss and a great chain in his hand, and he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old who is the devil and Satan and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him that he should not deceive the nations any longer, till the thousand years were completed, after these things he must be released for a short time." Before that binding and after that binding he is loose. And there is no reason to assume anything else. Only Jesus Christ can dispatch a holy angel to bind him. He moves about on this

earth, says Peter, as a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour. And I'll promise you, if Peter was into contemporary spiritual warfare, he would have said, "I bind you, Satan." But he didn't because he couldn't.

So, if he's moving around and if he's a formidable foe and if he wants to battle us as individuals and as families and as leaders and as churches, how do we deal with him? First point, verse 8, be alert. Be alert, watch your surroundings. Keep your eyes open. Be watchful. Satan can be defeated. He has already been vanquished by Christ. He can be, in Christ, defeated in the believer's life as well. Be alert. Watch your surroundings, watch your relationships. Take stock of the potential temptation.

Second thing he says, and here's where we really get to it, verse 9, resist him, resist him. James 4:7 says it this way, "Resist the devil and he will (what?) flee from you." The word "resist" means to stand up against, take your stand against. You say, "How do you do that?" I love this, verse 9, "Firm in the faith."

How do you deal with the devil? Mystically? Devil, I bind you? Demons, I tie you up? How do you deal with the devil? Firm in the faith. He is a deceiver, he is a liar and what you have to deal with him is truth and obedience to that truth. You say, "Is this statement 'firm in the faith' objective or subjective? Is he talking about firm in your trust in God or firm in the faith which is the Christian faith which is revealed truth?" And the answer is yes, both. Trusting God and living in accord with His truth. Isn't that so simple? So simple. You've got this formidable enemy prowling around wanting to chew you up and devour you. How you going to deal with him? Stand against him. How do you stand against him? Firm in the faith, the revealed Word of God, which has told you all about God, so that you can be firm in your faith in God. That's the issue.

Can I help you with that a little bit? Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10. Second Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3, Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh," we're human, physical, "though we walk in the flesh we don't war according to the flesh." There's no physical strategy against Satan. There's no mental strategy against Satan. There's no verbal strategy against Satan. You can't say words and make him run. We don't war according to the flesh. Verse 4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." The contrast between the flesh and the divine, between the human and God. And we don't battle Satan with human plans, human ingenuity or human words but with a divinely powerful expression of God. What is that? Verse 5, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

There's the key. Everything becomes captive to the truth and obedience to the truth. As I know the truth, as I obey the truth, Satan is resisted. And whatever enemy comes against me becomes captive as I stand on the truth, as I obey the truth. First Timothy chapter 1 verse 18, "This command I entrust to you, Timothy my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you," now listen to this, "that by them you may fight the good fight," here's how, "keeping the faith and a good conscience." What does that mean? Holding on to the faith which is the truth, the faith, the Christian faith, the revealed truth and a good conscience means that you've not only believed the truth, you've what? You've obeyed it and your conscience isn't accusing you, same principle.

How do you fight the good fight? How do you keep from the shipwrecking disaster that delivers you over to Satan, as he mentions in verse 20? How do you prevent that? Keeping the faith, holding it, guarding it and having the good conscience that doesn't accuse you because you haven't violated its

truth. Beloved, there's only one way to resist the devil and that is to know the truth, to believe the truth, to stand on the truth, to obey the truth. And when you do that, you stand against him and he what? He flees. What you say is immaterial. There's no formula for this.

Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 3: "Suffer hardship along with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." We're soldiers in a spiritual warfare. And how are we to fight? Verse 4: "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." Two things, if you're going to be a good soldier you know what the commander told you to do and you do it, right? That's how you please him. Same thing, you hold to the faith and you obey it.

And then that key passage, Ephesians 6, turn there quickly, Ephesians 6, verse 10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." That's that divinely powerful weaponry. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." Here he gives you the details of it, the details. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies" as they come against us as individuals, as families, as leaders, as churches.

Now in order to deal with the scheming deception of Satan and in order to stand firm, there's that same concept, stand firm. It never says attack Satan It says stand firm. It never says go after and chase him down on the cosmic level. It says stand firm, resist. How do you do it? Verse 13, take on the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day. And what's the evil day? Any day that evil comes. "And having done everything to stand firm," and here's how, "having your loins girded with" what "truth." Not only does it imply truth but truthfulness. Not only that I know truth but I'm committed to truth. Second thing, have on the breastplate of what? Righteousness, that means I'm obeying the truth. As soon as I am unrighteous, my breastplate's off, I'm vulnerable. Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. What is that? The confidence that you have made peace with God; the gospel says you can have peace with God. You stand your ground and say, "I have peace with God, God's on my side, I'm not fighting you. I'm letting Him do it." Take the shield of faith, which says I believe my God is able. Put on the helmet of salvation, the confidence in eternal life, the confidence that you're secure in Christ and in your hand the sword of the Spirit which is what? The Word of God. If you want to know all those details, get those tapes. I don't have time to go into them anymore than that.

And then in verse 18 he adds, "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit. And with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all saints." Here it is, beloved. Truth around your waist with righteousness, the commitment to obey to cover your vulnerable area, with confidence in the power of God, believing God is your shield, having eternal hope as your helmet, wield the sword of truth. That's how you deal with the enemy. And in it all, constant prayer, which is dependence on Him. That's how you resist. No magic, no formulas, the Word, holy life, confident trusting hope in God and you stand your ground.

Peter adds this so beautifully. In verse 9: "Knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." Does that help? What's he saying? Hey, in the middle of this you're not what? You're not alone. You're really not. The whole brotherhood, the whole Christian community is going through this. Suffering is a way of life as God is accomplishing His holy perfecting work in you. Just look at the goal, he says, and realize everybody's in it.

I know, sometimes you feel like you're out there alone. Sometimes I feel the battlements of hell coming after me. Sometimes it's so subtle I don't even notice it. Sometimes I can see it coming. I don't run for a formula. I don't run to some mystical dimension. It's a very simple thing and very concrete and very exacting and very precise. I meet temptation with truth, with what the Word of God says. I meet temptation with confidence in the power of my God, I meet temptation with prayer. I meet the onslaughts of the demons and the devil with the breastplate of righteousness so that there's no vulnerability there. And when you resist him in the armor of God and take your stand, he flees. So Peter says you're not alone, everybody's going through it. All your brethren in the world are experiencing the suffering of the roaring lion who seeks whom he may devour. And again I remind you, he comes at us through the system. All of a sudden you find yourself in a situation you don't want to be in, being tempted in a way that you didn't really think was going to happen. You find yourself vulnerable in a way you never thought could happen. Satan comes at you through the ugly system that he's concocted, he wears down your resistance, or he surprises you.

Wherever he comes from and in whatever form and manner, the solution is the same, spiritual weapons, stand in the truth, trust God. And in my trust in God I go to prayer and I let the commander fight the battle. If I know the truth and obey the truth and commit my life to God, I stand strong.

So, fundamental attitudes: Submission, humility, trust, self-control, vigilant defense. Listen very carefully, the next are going to be rapid fire. Number six, an attitude of hope, an attitude of hope. Verse 10, "And 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." Here's another attitude, beloved. This is the promise added to the exhortation of verse 9. This too is a very essential fundamental attitude. We're to live with the understanding that God's purpose realized in the future requires some pain in the present. And we've gone through this principle so many times in 1 Peter, I don't need to take a lot of time now to do it. I'll say that one line again. God's purpose realized in the future involves some pain in the present. One writer says, "God Himself in the wealth of His grace as the one who has called them to share in His own glory can be counted on according to His purpose to use their brief earthly sufferings to make them strong and steadfast. And when they become strong and steadfast, they are then to be the recipients of a greater eternal reward." So says Peter, "And after you have suffered for a little while." It may seem intense and it may seem long but it's really very brief, just a little while.

He used that same statement in chapter 1 verse 6, just a little while. But if you have suffered a little while, know this, the God of all grace — what a title, 2 Corinthians 1:3 He's called the God of all comfort, here He's the God of all grace — the God of all grace, undeserved favor, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, an effectual saving call, will Himself perfect, confirm, strength and establish you.

If you could only understand what the spiritual warfare is doing for you, you would appreciate it instead of resenting it. After all, nothing can separate you from the love of Christ. Nothing can change that. So all the suffering that comes here is just to strengthen you, to establish you, to confirm you, to perfect you, to make you more the man and woman of God that you should be.

This isn't so much talking about grace for eternity. God's already promised that. This is grace for time. This is while we're alive making us what we ought to be.

Just a couple of notes about this verse, beautiful. God who called you, again an effectual saving call as it always is in the New Testament epistles, and you can check 1 Peter 1:15, 2:9, 21 and 3:9, but "the God who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself" I love this, now listen to me, while you are being personally attacked by the enemy, you are being personally perfected by God. It's personal. Himself He's doing it. Marvelous thought. He is intimately involved in the suffering of our lives.

So what about those four words? Well, they're almost synonyms. To perfect means to bring you to wholeness, to confirm means to set you fast, to strengthen means to make you strong, to establish you means to lay you as a foundation. They all speak of strength, resoluteness. And that's what God wants to do in your life through the spiritual battle.

They ought to encourage you, those four words, in the spiritual battle. God Himself is there battling and through the battle you become perfect, confirmed, strong and established. Submission, humility, trust, self-control, vigilant defense, and hope. You say, "Why hope?" Because in the midst of my suffering I have hope in what I am becoming; and because of what I am becoming, what I will be in eternal glory, that's hope.

Number seven, an attitude of worship. Do I need to say much? Verse 11, Peter just bursts forth in a doxology, "To Him be dominion forever and ever, amen." Just a doxology. He said it in chapter 4, verse 11, that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever amen. Peter's just overwhelmed by this and this too introduces us in an indirect way to another right attitude and that's an attitude of worship. Throughout this whole series of verses we've been getting the deep things of God put in place: That we are to humble ourselves before God and He'll exalt us, that we're to cast our care upon God for He cares for us, He's powerful, He's compassionate. We are to fight in His strength for He alone can defeat the enemy and in the process perfect us. No wonder he says, "Give Him all the praise, give Him all the dominion forever and ever, amen." And so we say that the heart of the Christian must always be filled with praise, must always be filled with glory given to God. He has the dominion, He has the power, He has the authority, He has the sovereignty, He is worthy of all of our praise. That's the worshiping heart.

And when you have a worshiping heart, beloved, it keeps you from questioning the difficulties of life, does it not? When you have a worshiping heart you don't question God, you just worship Him. By the way, the word "dominion," *kratos*, means strength. It's only used here in the whole New Testament. And it speaks of God's ability to dominate. He is the dominant one. Nothing is beyond His control, not our suffering and not Satan and his demons and the whole system. Nothing is beyond His control, we worship Him for that.

Then Peter comes to a conclusion. And in this little conclusion as he draws this epistle to an end, he mentions two other attitudes; at least we can draw them out of his final words. And I think he picks up the pen here, probably been writing through a secretary and now he takes the pen in his own hand and he mentions an attitude of faithfulness indirectly. Verse 12, "Through Silvanus, our faithful brother, for so I regard him, I've written to you briefly exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." There's no reason, by the way, to assume this is any other than Silas, although that was somewhat a common name, but very likely the same Silas who traveled with Paul and is often mentioned in Paul's epistles. He was a prophet, according to Acts 15:32, he was a

Roman citizen, according to Acts 16:37. We know about Silas. Silas may well have been the one who wrote down Peter's words and the one who perhaps would even bear them to these folks. But Peter calls him a faithful brother, "for so I regard him," highly respected, faithful.

It just reminds us, doesn't it, of another virtue, being faithful. And he says, "I've written to you briefly," just five short chapters, but oh how rich. It is brief, really, short, condensed. And he says in it I've been exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. He's saying, "I've been telling you about God's grace, His saving grace, His sanctifying grace, His grace through trials, His grace through sufferings, I want you to stand firm in His grace. Be faithful to it, that's what he's saying. Silas was faithful. Will you be faithful? Stand in this grace. It's like Romans 5:2, "In grace you stand," Paul says, and Peter says, "and please stand there, will you?" Be faithful. Be faithful.

And then he adds one final virtue that we can call the attitude of affection. Verse 13: "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings. So does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love, peace be to all who are in Christ." The word "affection" doesn't appear there but by way of example we can see that he demonstrated affection, didn't he? A final word that speaks of love. She who is in Babylon must refer to a church. Female terms for the church are common. You can check 2 John 1 and 13. And Babylon most likely refers to Rome. It does in Revelation 17 and 18. That seems proper here. One writer says it's a cryptic name for Rome. In times of persecution, writers exercised unusual care not to endanger Christians to whom they wrote letters. For instance, when John was banished to Patmos during the persecution instigated by the Emperor Domitian, he called Rome Babylon. Peter, who mentions persecution in nearly every chapter of his epistle, died a martyr's death near Rome. According to tradition he was crucified upside down. In short, Peter wrote this epistle near the end of his life when he probably stayed in the imperial city, and didn't want the letter to be found and the church to be persecuted, so maybe he kind of hid it under the word Babylon.

But well could be saying the saints of Rome, the church, chosen together with you also elect, sends you greetings, Christian affection. So does my son Mark, Peter's spiritual son, not his physical son. Mark, called John Mark, is mentioned in Acts 12:12, he accompanied Paul, stayed with Paul during the apostle's time in prison in Rome. Tradition indicates that Peter helped him write the gospel of Mark; that when Mark wrote his gospel, Peter was there to assist him. But here you have a little collection of affection. The church, to your church, me to you, Mark to you and in 14 he says, "Just kiss everybody, will you?" An outward sign of affection often mentioned in the New Testament. By the way, it was men to men, and women to women in ancient times, a customary part of early church affection.

And he closes, "Peace be to you all who are in Christ." It's back to the basics then as he ends, isn't it? Back to basic attitudes: Submission, humility, trust, self-denial, vigilant defense, hope, worship, faithfulness, and affection. Beloved, let me tell you something and I close with this, there's no way to produce those in your life through any mystical experience. They come from the truth. And as the truth is poured into your life week in and week out, day in, day out, it begins to change your character and create these kinds of attitudes. That's why we do what we do. We thank God for the privilege.

Father, we do thank You for tonight. We've covered so many things. Thank You for the patience, the attentiveness of these precious people to this hour in Your Word. Thank You for the fellowship we've enjoyed and that it's been enriched as we have learned even more how to be the people You want us to be. May these attitudes be characteristic of our lives, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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