

UNDER PRESSURE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
1st Peter 5.8-14 | September 2, 2018
Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our summer series in 1st Peter. On the first Sunday of June we began our study in 1st Peter 1.1-9, seeing how God's chosen people were "elect exiles" scattered throughout the known world. In these final verses, Peter instructs them on the source of their suffering and offers one final encouragement to those in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia."

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever thought you understood something but then realized there was way more going on than previously realized? What was it?

III. Study the Text

a. Read 1st Peter 5.6-9.

Peter's exhortation on humility does not mean we should be passive or indifferent to the painful events in our lives. Nor are his thoughts on God's care an invitation for us to be careless. On the contrary, "the sufferings that afflict believers in the present life may come to them through the agency of other human beings, whom they can see and hear, God's people must at all times remember that behind the seen is the unseen."

How does this explanation help connect the themes of verses 6-7 with 8-9?

b. The NIV translates 1st Peter 5.8, "Be alert and of sober mind." How would you put this in your own words?

What are the opposites of these states of mind? Why is Peter concerned about them?

c. Peter refers to the devil with a simile. What image does he choose? Why do you think he chooses that particular image? What does it mean to be "devoured" in this context?

d. The Greek word used for devil is *diabolos*, which comes from the root word *diaballein*, meaning "to split." In other words, the devil is "a splitter, a divider, a wedge driver."

Where have you seen the devil try to draw a wedge between people in Scripture?

Where have you seen splitting or dividing in your own life?

e. Like the great "principalities and powers" passage in Ephesians 6.10-17, Peter instructs believers to "stand firm in the faith." Why didn't he instruct Christians to *advance* against the "roaring lion"?

- f. What rationale does Peter give for “standing firm”? Why should we stand firm instead of giving up?
- g. Continue the metaphor of the devil as a roaring lion. What animal would the church be?
- h. Read 1st Peter 5.10-11.

Peter insists that suffering has an end, in both senses of the word. Its *purpose* is that it purifies us, as we have seen in previous studies. In terms of *time*, suffering also has an end: it will only be for “a little while.”

Many people, however, suffer significantly, for years. How could this be called “a little while”? What influences Peter’s thinking here?

- i. Peter insists that God “will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” The word he employs is “reminiscent of what he used to have to do in his fishing business” when nets needed mending. “After the wear and tear of daily living for God in a hostile environment, [we] need to be renewed, restored, fully re-equipped.”

Have you ever needed this kind of renewal, restoration, repair, and re-equipping? How did God provide that for you?

Are you in need of it now? How can others be in prayer for you?

- j. Read 1st Peter 5.12-14.

“With the help of Silas” may mean Peter dictated this letter to Silas, Silas delivered the letter, or even that Silas composed the letter as a ghost-writer, embodying Peter’s thoughts. Whatever it meant, notice the mention of Silas, Mark, and “she who is in Babylon,” most likely referring to the church in Rome.

Why is it important for us to remember that even Peter, Jesus’ right hand man, didn’t do ministry alone?

- k. “A kiss of love” was a non-romantic greeting given from men to men and women to women. While we might not offer a kiss, how do we greet each other? Why is it important to do so?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to reveal to you the ways you have suffered from “splitting” and ask Him to help mend you back together,
- b. Lift up those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith, praying that God would help them see the true source of their suffering and would give them the grace to stand firm,
- c. Pray for Christian kids all over America who are back at schools where it is increasingly difficult to claim the name of Jesus.

