

“Safe and secure from all alarms” (23)

The last time we were together Peter reminded us when he was writing to the elders that it’s absolutely crucial that every congregation has a good spiritually mature leadership in place. And today he is going to remind the younger people that they need to submit to their elders. But before we get into the text today, let me ask you a few questions.

Why do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet coke? Why do we leave cars worth thousands of pounds in our driveways and put our useless junk in the garage? Why can’t women put on mascara with their mouth closed? Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavouring, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons? Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour? You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don’t they make the whole plane out of that stuff? Why don’t sheep shrink when it rains?

You see there are many good questions which don’t really have a good answer to. But one question we should all know the answer too by now is **why we have to submit to so many people**. Peter has already reminded us to submit to the government authorities in **1 Peter 2:13+14**. He has already reminded us that Christian slaves need to submit to their masters in **1 Peter 2:18**. He has already reminded us that Christian wives need to submit to their husbands in **1 Peter 3:1**.

And today Peter is going to remind the younger people to submit to their elders. **1 Peter 5:5 “In a similar way, you young people must submit to the elders.”** Now Peter may well be referring to the elders mentioned in **1 Peter 5:1-4** or he may be referring to older Christians. But whoever he is referring to, the message is the same, submit. And true submission can only happen when we follow Peter’s advice in the next few verses.

1 Peter 5:5 “Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder. Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility, to subject yourselves to one another.” To clothe ourselves with humility means to have a humble opinion about ourselves. To boast that you are more gifted than someone else is not showing humility. To boast that I give more in the offering every week than anyone else is not showing humility. To boast that I’m a better preacher than someone else is not showing humility.

It’s a bit like the **Reverend Obediah Franklin** who wrote a sermon on "humility" then filed it away. Why? Because he wanted to save it for a really big occasion when he could impress a lot of people.

A young friend of mine from Loughborough designs t-shirts and I asked to design one for me. On the front of the t-shirt it says, **‘no-one does humility’** and on the back it says, **‘like me’**.

Loved ones, humility doesn’t look at self, humility looks at others as being better than yourself. It’s the very same mind set of Jesus Christ Himself. **Philippians 2:3-5 “Do not act out of selfish ambition or conceit, but with humility think of others as being better than yourselves. Do not be concerned about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others. Have the same attitude among yourselves that was also in the Messiah Jesus.”**

Paul says we need to show humility with each other so that we can maintain peace and unity in our relationships with each other. And Peter goes on to say humility is needed if we want to keep that relationship right with God.

1 Peter 5:5 "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" Now I don’t know if you know this or not but God has got a lot of time for the humble. God deeply respects the humble in spirit. **Isaiah 57:15 “For this is what the high and lofty One says, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “He lives in the height and in holiness, and also with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite”**.

Isaiah 66:1+2 “This is what the Lord says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you would build for me, and where will my resting place be? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came into being,” declares the Lord. “But this is the one to whom I will look favourably: to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my message”.

And so loved ones God loves those who have a humble and contrite spirit. And the reason He does is simply because those who are humble will always trust in Him to lift them up when the time is right. **1 Peter 5:6 “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”**.

I remember when I was young and my father used to take me out hunting. We used to walk through forests looking for rabbits or pigeons and sometimes we had to get up really early in the morning when it was dark. Now I remember being very scared walking around the woods in the dark but I held on to my father's hand very tightly. And let me tell you at that time my hand was tiny compared to his and I felt safe and secure in those huge hands.

Now remember these Christians whom Peter is writing too have or will be very soon going through some scary times of persecution. And so Peter is saying, even in times of persecution we need be humble and trust that God is working in our lives. We need to trust and know that His hands are more than big enough to help us through any situation we may find ourselves in. And remember this loved ones; God won't take you somewhere He isn't willing to go with you Himself.

Careless drivers often push their cars beyond their designated capabilities, and the poor vehicle chugs and chugs until the motor finally dies. Daring and foolish engineers will put too much pressure on their boilers, or try to force more power from an engine than it can provide.

But our Master guarantees that tasks shall be balanced with the precise strength we possess. He knows the exact pressure we can stand, for He has made us; He knows the utmost load we can lift, and will not suffer us to be tried, tested, above what we are able. So yes it can be difficult at times, yes the burden your asked to carry may be heavy at times but God is there to help, if only you would trust Him enough to allow Him to.

A man who was walking along a highway was passed by the driver of a pickup truck. The driver, noticing that the weary traveller was carrying a heavy backpack, stopped a few hundred feet in front of him and offered him a ride. The man accepted the offer. After driving a few miles, the driver noticed that his fellow traveller still had his load fastened to his back. "Why not put your load down and rest?" The man replied, "I could not think of doing that; it is kind enough of you to give me a ride, without allowing me to put my load upon your seat."

Now is that man crazy or what? Well yes he is but do you know something loved ones? We can be just as crazy sometimes. We too still cling on to our worries when God asks us to cast all our worries on Him.

1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your worries on him, because he cares for you". Peter says don't worry about things over which you have no control. Someone's health takes a turn for the worse and their family realise there is nothing they can do to help the situation so they say, 'its ok, the situation is in God's hands', really then why are they still worrying about it? Someone is about to lose their job because of cut backs and they say, 'it's ok, the situation is in God's hands', really then why are they still stressing about it?

Loved ones Peter is saying when things are out of our control, let your Heavenly Father worry about such things. Have you ever thought about an ambulance? An ambulance tears around town with its siren blaring. It is always going to a crisis or leaving a crisis. It is built for emergencies. Now it's such a shame that many people live the same way, including Christians. They run their lives with a siren going. Every day is desperate, and every moment is a crisis, or a preparation for one.

And living our lives like that leaves no room for smelling roses or enjoying sunsets. Even worse, it leaves no time for sharing friendships and building love. Ask yourselves this loved ones, what if some of the things you are running around to do did not get done? Suppose you substituted a quiet walk around the block or time off to call on a friend or time out to read a book? Suppose you wrote an encouraging note to someone who really needed it? Would your world fall apart? Or would it perhaps get back into perspective?

We give ourselves headaches and hernias' because we worry so much about the things we have no control over. We take time off work or end up on medication because we stress about the things we have no control over. It shouldn't be like that for the Christian, you've got a God who wants you to give them all to Him. We weren't designed to live like that, you weren't born a worrier, you learned how to worry by the people around you.

And so Jesus says in Matthew 6:31-34 "Therefore don't be anxious, saying, 'What will we eat?', 'What will we drink?' or, 'With what will we be clothed?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first God's Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Each day's own evil is sufficient".

Now Jesus uses the word **anxious** in this passage but it's the same Greek word Peter uses in **1 Peter 5:7** for **worry**. Now you need to know that God doesn't see worry the way we see worry. The Greek word for '**worry or anxious**' is the word '**merimna**' which simply means distraction. And so what Peter is telling us loved ones is this, don't be distracted by things you don't have any control over because our God isn't easily distracted.

Jesus is saying don't be distracted by a lack of food or drink or clothes, I know what you need and I won't be easily distracted from supplying those needs. You see I believe being distracted is a sin because we forget who God is and what He can do with His mighty hands.

Seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness should come before our material needs. Seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness should come before our physical needs. And what worry or anxiety does is steals from us the blessings of today.

We can't seek first His kingdom and His righteousness if we're being distracted over something which may happen tomorrow. We can't seek first His kingdom and His righteousness if we are being distracted over something we have no control over. In other words we can't give God our attention and serve Him daily if we're so busy running around like headless chickens trying to solve a problem we can't solve.

You know Josh and I used to have staring competitions, to see who can stare at each other the longest without blinking. And sometimes I would pull a funny face or stick my tongue out at him to distract him. In other words I would do whatever I could to get his attention away from what he was supposed to be doing. Worry distracts us from focusing on God, loved ones.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that we're to "**keep our eyes fixed on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.**" Now you can't do that if you're being distracted by other things. You can't keep your eyes fixed on Jesus if you're worrying about tomorrow or worrying about something you have no control over. People who get distracted a lot forget to pray to their God who has the mighty hands. People who get distracted a lot forget to read about their God with the mighty hands in the Bible. People who get distracted a lot forget about all His other children who are in His mighty hands.

And do you know what happens when we get distracted by the cares of this life? Do you know what happens when you take your eyes off the author and perfecter of our faith? Satan comes along and tries to steal your salvation in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:8+9 "**Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings.**"

Loves ones as Christians we need to remember we have an enemy and Peter calls him the devil. Peter says be careful not to get distracted by the worries of this world because the devil is on the lookout. When Christians are going through difficult times, some stop praying, some stop reading the Bible, some stop meeting with God's people. They've lost sight of goodness of God, they forget how God helped them in times past and they get distracted from truth.

And it's then when they are at their most vulnerable spiritually and prone to attacks from the devil himself. It's fascinating watching a pride of lions on the prowl for some food. They will carefully stalk out their pray for hours at a time and when they come across some wildebeest they will look for the most vulnerable one or one which is straying away from the rest. Which is exactly the way Peter describes the devil, Peter says the devil is like a "**roaring lion, looking for distracted Christians so he can destroy them.**" He wants to steal your salvation Christian and you need to be aware of that.

Now just as a side note, **what does this tell us about the doctrine of "once saved, always saved"?** If such a doctrine is true where some religious groups teach that once you become a Christian you can still live your life however you wish because you're always going to be saved. If that is true then **why would Peter even bother to warn Christians who cannot be "devoured"?** **Why does Satan even bother to seek out those whom he cannot "devour"?**

If once saved always saved is true then why would the Hebrew writer say in **Hebrews 3:12-15** "**Beware, brothers, lest perhaps there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called "today;" lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we**

have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm to the end: while it is said, "Today if you will hear his voice, don't harden your hearts, as in the rebellion."

The reason the Bible gives us many warnings about losing our salvation is because you can lose your salvation. It's because there is a very real danger of apostasy, we have such warnings in the Bible. And that's why the doctrine of 'once saved always saved' is such a dangerous doctrine. Not only is it unbiblical, it's putting Christians back into the hands of the very person who is trying to steal our souls in the first place.

No wonder Peter reminds us in **1 Peter 5:8** to "Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful." No wonder Jesus also reminds us in **Luke 21:34-36** "So be careful, or your hearts will be loaded down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day will come on you suddenly. For it will come like a snare on all those who dwell on the surface of all the earth. Therefore be watchful all the time, praying that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will happen, and to stand before the Son of Man."

There's a story about a young boy who went shopping for his mother. After returning with the few items which his mother had requested, he said, "Mom, the devil is in that store." Thinking her son had seen someone in a devil's costume, she asked, "What do you mean the devil is in the store?" His response was serious: "I walked by the sweetie counter and one of the sweets said, 'Take me, take me'"

When we go out shopping, we have to resist the urge to buy those things we either can't afford or simply don't need. It is a constant battle everyone faces. The same can be said of the Christian life. Wherever we go, Satan is there tempting us with his destructive wares, but loved ones God always has a way out for us. Peter says in **1 Peter 5:9** "Withstand him steadfast." James says in **James 4:7** "But resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Now it doesn't matter if you're a young Christian or a mature Christian the temptation is universal, Satan's marketing department has centuries of experience. And we have all pictured ourselves fleeing from Satan but **have you ever pictured Satan fleeing from you?** Because the Bible says when we finally stop being distracted by things we have no control over, the devil will actually flee from us.

But we need to withstand him, we need to resist him. And you withstand him and resist him by holding onto to your faith, as Peter says in **1 Peter 5:9** "Withstand him steadfast in your faith." You withstand him and resist him by holding onto to your hope.

Paul says in **Colossians 1:21-23** "You, being in past times alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and blameless before him, if it is so that you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the Good News which you heard, which is being proclaimed in all creation under heaven; of which I, Paul, was made a servant".

You see loved ones; the devil is very good at convincing Christians that they are alone in their struggles. He whispers in our ears, 'oh nobody really cares for you anyway', 'God isn't real otherwise you wouldn't be suffering the way you are'. 'You're so called brothers and sisters say they love you but they don't really'. And so he tries to isolate you from God, His word and His people and tries to convince you that you're all alone with your struggles.

Well loved ones, don't listen to him, you are never alone in your struggles. **1 Peter 5:9** "Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings." Peter says never let the devil convince you that you are alone in your struggles. Christians all over this planet are going through struggles, some physical, some mental, some emotional, some spiritual but they are struggles. There are Christians in this room who have struggles but they are not struggling alone. Too often we pay too great a price for something that looks so good and promises so much.

Fish are hooked because they are attracted to something that looks like food and would make a good meal only to become food themselves. Do not be fooled loved ones, the world offers you many things that are not worth the price of your soul. Every single Christian struggles with sin and temptation, the question is, **are we remaining steadfast? Are we resisting him who tempts us?**

1 Corinthians 10:13 “No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

Paul says let me tell you Christian, your struggle is not unique; you're not the only one who struggles with certain sins. The question is; **are we actively looking for a way out? Do we continue to give in to the same sin for years and years or are we seeking the way out which God provides?**

Now I know this sermon is directed at all Christians but remember Peter is addressing those who are young. And that's because it's the young Christians amongst us that are often the most tested by our adversary, the devil. It's the young who have not had the time or experience to learn the value of being submissive to others. It's the young who have not had the time or experience to learn the value of being humble. It's the young who have not had the time or experience to learn the value of being watchful for the devil.

The mature Christians amongst us should be teaching them how to withstand and overcome the devil. The mature Christians should be teaching them that when the time is right God Himself will lift them up. And it's then we all can truly sing, that we're **'leaning on His everlasting arms, safe and secure from all alarms'**.