

*6Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 7Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*

*8Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.*

*10And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. 11To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.*

Have any of you ever heard any advice like this: Wash your hands before you come to the table.

Be careful when you cross the street.

Time to do your homework!

Eat healthier food and not so much junk.

Sit up straight – don't slouch.

Clean up your room.

And the one who is likely to say these sorts of things? Mom.

The advice comes from love but far too often we must learn for ourselves. Maybe once upon a time you were told – don't touch that – it's hot! You touched anyway and suffered the pain.

Now if you are someone who cannot learn from others but must learn everything for yourself you can stop listening to this sermon right now because a lot of advice is coming. But if you do not want the blister from touching the hot surface, listen.

Let's start with these words from the second lesson: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he may exalt you in due time."

We human beings think a lot of ourselves. We have invented air travel – space travel – we have unraveled the secrets of the atom – we are unlocking the code of human genes. We clone creatures, some dream of cloning humans. Humble? We should be proud.

But what about the one who made all those things that we are just beginning to understand a little? How do we compare to the one who was before the beginning of the universe?

Humble yourselves – not by putting yourself down but by seeing yourself always next to God. Don't measure yourself by the neighbor down the street or the girl in the next row. Measure your life alongside of the one who spoke the word that called light into existence - and life. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.

“Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”

Anxiety – do you know anything about that? Do you know what it is like to feel fear rising – squeezing – crushing? If you do, Peter is saying to take that anxiety off of you, unwrap it – pull it out of yourself and hand it over to God.

“Cast all your anxiety on him – for he cares for you.”

There are many things in this world that can make you afraid – without God's help they will overwhelm you. But you are not without God's help – God cares for you. Give God your anxiety – let God give you faith.

“Discipline yourselves. Keep alert. For your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith.”

I remember an evening when Sue and I were walking a familiar road in Colorado just at twilight. 1.2 miles down the dirt road – then 1.2 miles back. But on the way back we noticed tracks that had not been there on our journey out. Cat tracks – just like our kittens tracks only this big. A mountain lion was prowling. Suddenly our very familiar world was a place of danger.

Peter is reminding us that evil is always close by – in the every day, familiar places of our life. Keep alert – discipline yourself. Once we saw the tracks we stayed in the center of the road – we did not linger but went quickly home.

I think of all that is prowling out there for you young people who are being confirmed in your faith today. A day may come when you start to feel sorry for yourself or that life is unfair. That is a sure sign telling you that the lion is near. Keep alert – think about Jesus’ love for you – think about what God has given you – promised you. You will get home safe.

“Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”

You are not alone in your faith. Whenever you trust in God you are not alone – even when you suffer you are not alone.

Peter has to remind Christians of that. For sometimes it feels that when you trust in God you are the only one trusting in God. Everyone else is going along with the crowd. You are not alone in your faith. Your Christian sisters and brothers everywhere are undergoing the same trials.

Finally Peter assures us: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.”

Now I would like to believe that every one of you hearing this sermon will never go wrong from this day forward. Having heard this warning you will always see your life in relation to God and be humbled. You will cast all your anxiety on God discipline yourself, be alert, resist the devil, be steadfast in your faith. But I know what happens to me and what happened to Peter who wrote this letter. Yes, sometimes think I am the one who will be in charge – I am the one who will have to handle my fears – I am the one who will have to handle all temptation. And you know about Peter – how he bragged to Jesus that he would never fail Jesus. Yet when a young maid said Peter was a follower of Jesus, Peter swore that he never knew Jesus. And when I try my hardest and trust in me I fail Jesus, too.

But Jesus never failed Peter, and has never failed me, and will never fail you. Trust in him – return to him – ask for a new beginning with him and he will put you back on your feet once more. Nothing will ever be greater than Jesus’ power to give you a fresh start - nothing in this world or any world to come.

Believe in Jesus.

Believe in Jesus. Amen.