

Week 10 - Let Go and Let God - 1Peter 5:7-9

Scripture Reading: 1Peter 5:6-10

Introduction

When I was a student, I once had a teacher hand out a test that said at the top:

“Directions: You have five minutes to complete this test. Carefully read the entire test before doing anything. In order to ensure the accuracy of this exam, you should not use more than the allotted time of five minutes. Good Luck!”

The test included 20 instructions to do all sorts of things like completing arithmetic problems and write the name of your favorite band or singer in the bottom left-hand corner and to draw a rectangle containing a five-pointed star in the lower right-hand corner of the paper - all sorts of things like that

But question 18 said:

“Now that you have carefully read all of the parts so far, and you have not carried out any of the actual work, skip the next 2 questions and go back and only complete #3.”

And, of course #3 instructed you to write your name and the date at the top of the test and continue work quietly until the five minutes had elapsed

Of course, reading all the way through before beginning was the whole point of the test and only those who did so were successful in completing the test satisfactorily

This morning we are taking on a saying that seems to be so widespread that one cannot determine its origin

Some trace the impetus that led to the saying back to the 19th Keswick movement while others find its source in the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous

But, regardless of who first uttered the phrase, it seems to be everywhere Christians congregate now

“Let go and let God” the final “bumper sticker” of our series and one that, I suspect, we have all heard and most of us have used and it’s another of those sayings that sound right but aren’t quite

And, again, it’s another of those sayings that is more misleading than absolutely erroneous

After all, properly understood it has a message that is biblical

But it’s also a saying that can lead us very quickly into error if we aren’t careful because it can lead us to practice passive Christianity that simply sits back and waits for God to do things in our lives and in our world

And, like the test in our opening illustration, the secret is in looking at all the Bible has to say to us and not looking at verses and teachings in isolation

As many sincere people have done when using 1Peter 5:7 as justification for “letting go and letting God”

So, this morning, we are going to look at the saying primarily through the lens of **1Peter 5:7-9** but we will also be looking at many other passages as well to see how we should view the bumper sticker, “Let go and let God”

If you are taking notes, we will first look at **how the saying is correct**

Then we will consider **how we err** in our understanding of the saying

And then we will finish up with taking a look at **how** Scripture repeatedly affirms **we should live**

As I said a moment ago, the saying “Let go and let God” isn’t necessarily wrong so let’s begin by looking at what is correct about it

I. How the saying is correct

Let's look again at verses 6-7 [**1Peter 5:6-7**]

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Clearly, these two verses contain a single sentence that tells us what to do and then tells us specifically how to do it. Peter, in verse 6, loosely quotes from Proverbs 3:34 as he tells followers of Christ to “humble” themselves under the mighty hand of God.

And we see a similar command echoed by James in **James 4:10** which tells believers to:

“Humble yourselves before the Lord”

And according to my Greek lexicon, in both of those instances, the word translated as “**humble**” is a verb that means: “To cause something to become low in height” or “to make low”

Webster adds the ideas of reducing the power, independence, or exaltation of a person or thing and making a person lowly in mind and taking away their pride and arrogance.

And looking through the pages of Scripture we see quite clearly what God thinks of pride:

Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things the Lord hates and listed first in verse 17 [**Proverbs 6:17**] is “haughty eyes” which symbolize pride.

Then **Proverbs 16:5** tells us that “*Everyone who is arrogant in the heart is an abomination to the Lord*”

And a few verses down we read in **Proverbs 16:18** “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*”

And in **1Peter 5:5** just one verse earlier, Peter commands believers to “clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’”

So we rightly read in verse 6 [**1Peter 5:6**] -

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

Then we come to the how in verse 7 when we come to the word “**casting**”

[**1Peter 5:7**] – casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you

“Casting” is how we should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

We are to throw or hurl - both great action words - our anxieties on God so as to remove them from ourselves and let God carry them.

And **anxieties** are those feelings of apprehension or distress that we all feel from time to time when facing possible danger, set-backs, or difficulties.

Anxieties disturb our peace of mind and make us uneasy and they often keep us from acting as we know we should.

And God says that we should not gently lay but hurl those feelings onto his shoulders and let him carry them.

But pride keeps us from doing that doesn't it?

Pride would rather suffer than admit it needs help.

Pride doesn't ever seek help because to do so kills pride and replaces it with humility.

Sadly, we would rather fret and stew and suffer under the weight of our anxieties than risk giving up the illusion of control over our circumstances and trust in God to take care of us.

But **Psalms 37:5** tells us: “*Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*”

And **Psalm 55:22** says: *“Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.”*

And Jesus taught in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 that God knows what we need and will supply it so we don't need to be anxious about our needs

So, to the degree that we understand “let go and let God” to mean that we shouldn't fret and worry and obsess over our situations, circumstances, and needs; it is correct, it's a biblical sentiment if that's all it means

However, that's not the only way that the saying is interpreted and many have taken the saying in a completely different way and strayed into error as a result

So let's next consider how it is that we err with the statement

II. How we err

Our error tends to stem from something that we are repeatedly warned against and that is taking verses out of context

And that situation is fueled by the way we typically memorize God's Word

Taking a look at our passage in 1Peter 5, I would suspect that, if you have memorized verse 7, you have done so without regard to the beginning of the sentence it concludes or the rest of the paragraph in which it's found

I think that's a fair assumption because that's typically the way we memorize - one verse at a time

But that method leads to the isolation of partial thoughts that can lead us astray

Let's consider another verse that is popular for memorization, **Psalm 46:10** –

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!”

How many of you have memorized that verse?

How many of you have, more accurately, memorized the first sentence of that verse?

Psalm 27:14 is another verse that often gets memorized out of context and misapplied as a result –

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

And each of those three verses: 1Peter 5:7; Psalm 46:10; and Psalm 27:14 when considered in isolation from their context, can cause sincere Christ-followers to take a passive approach to their life

However, when we look at them in their respective contexts we see that they all teach the same thing although it is a very different thing from teaching a lack of action or passivity

Considering them in reverse order, Psalm 27 begins with David asking two questions that set up the context in which we find verse 14 [**Psalm 27:1**]

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Then David goes on to detail attacks from enemies and his own activities and his confidence in God's provision through them all

And the message of the psalm is that David has confident expectation in God that keeps him from fear as he continues his life of fighting, worshipping, learning, praying, etc.

David's idea of waiting was anything but passive as he expressed active expectation, based on his trust in the Lord, that what he desired would come

Likewise, in Psalm 46, which is a psalm by the Sons of Korah, we read in the opening verses [**Psalm 46:1-3**]

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Once again, we see the themes of danger and the expression that the psalmist wasn't afraid because God was his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

The psalm continues by extolling the virtues of God and his kingdom and how God fights for his people

But then the speaker changes in verse 10 where we see God issue the command to be still and recognize just who he is before switching back to the psalmist for the final verse praising God for his presence and activity

Again, what is in view in Psalm 46:10 is not a command to cease from activity but a lack of fear and a sense of peace in the midst of trying conditions -

To display the calm assurance, even in the midst of danger, that God will prevail that comes from knowing who God is

Rather than calling for a cessation of activity on our part,

Waiting on the Lord and being still involves relying on and being content with God's timing and the things he allows into our lives

But it also involves taking the right action in the right way at the right time

So, let's look back at our passage from 1Peter 5 where we will see the same thing as we look at how we should live

III. How we should live

What we have seen thus far is that God cares for us so we can cast all our anxieties on him knowing that he will carry them for us and look after us

But God's protection of us shouldn't serve to make us passive; rather, it should turn us into fearless, mighty warriors

When we consider Satan and the fact that he is a very powerful, supernatural force that truly does seek to devour us as a roaring lion would devour a sheep, we recognize that our anxieties are quite real and quite reasonable

Therefore, we have to deal with our anxieties in the right way; by giving them to God

What we have seen so far is good and true and quite helpful but the subject doesn't end there and Peter has more to say about it

And the reality is that there is a hugely important connection between verses 7 and 8 even though there is not connecting word present

And when we read the entire paragraph with the idea that the thoughts are all connected and not isolated tidbits we see Peter declare that the result of God's care for us is that we can fight against the devil and win

We can be sober-minded or in control of our thought processes and free of the danger of irrational thinking that fear introduces

Anxiety leads to blurred thinking and the reality of our enemy means we must be sharp, clear, and alert in our minds

And that means we have to prepare our thinking in advance

Peter speaks to this preparation for and the sober-mindedness it brings in **1Peter 1:13** which says –

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We can be alert and watchful without being anxious

Paul commands watchfulness as well in **1Corinthians 16:13** where he says *“Be watchful, stand firm, act like men, be strong”*

As did Jesus in Matthew 26:41 when he told his disciples “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation...”

While we know the devil seeks to devour us making it necessary for us to be alert we also know God love and cares for us so we need never be anxious in our alertness only letting our watchfulness prepare us for resistance

And we can stand up to the enemy without being concerned that our resistance is futile

We have **Ephesians 6:10** where we are told to “*be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might*”

But then Paul goes on to say in the following verses that we are to put on the armor that God has given us so that we can stand firm against the devil -

Again we see activity without anxiety in view because we have to fight but we know who supplies us and backs us up and guarantees us victory

And we see the active Christian life in other places in the New Testament as well

Consider **1Peter 4:10-11** where we see God supplying what we need but us serving with what God supplies –

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Or **1Corinthians 15:10** where Paul tells how God’s grace resulted in Paul’s hard work as God worked through him

And that working together with God is shown again in **Philippians 2:12-13** where Paul writes that we are to

“Work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works through [us] both to will and to work for his good pleasure”

Then in verse 9 [**1Peter 5:9**], Peter gives another weapon for resisting the supernatural lion that is the devil through being “*firm in your faith*”

Again we see the idea of planting one’s feet and setting one’s jaw confident not in one’s own strength but putting all confidence in God’s power and standing steadfast before the devil

I want you to realize that we are told often in the pages of the Bible to flee from various evils and temptations but we are never told to flee from the devil - we are told to have faith in God and resist the devil

Satan will run away from the resistance of the weakest believer who acts in faith in the power and authority of Jesus

Then in Peter gives another reason for being active without anxiety when he informs us that we aren’t being singled out by Satan and God hasn’t lost control of the situation

Satan’s prowling and attacking is all part of the normal Christian life

And then he says in verse 10 [**1Peter 5:10**] “*After you have suffered a little while the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*”

Notice Peter doesn’t say “if” but rather he states it as a foregone conclusion that the Christ-follower will suffer for “a little while”

So, we might well ask how long “a little while” lasts

And for that answer we need to look at **1Peter 1:3-7** where Peter uses the same phrase

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notice in verse 6 Peter [**1Peter 1:6**] uses the phrase, “for a little while” in saying that his original audience had been grieved by various trials to test the genuineness of their faith

And the rest of the passage shows us how long that “little while” is to last which is until the return of Jesus Christ as we see in verse 7 [**1Peter 1:7**]

In other words, this “little while” refers to the church age - that is to say for the duration of your life here on earth

And, looking at **1Peter 1:9**, we see that what Christ-followers are going through in this life will result in them obtaining the outcome of [their] faith, the salvation of their souls

Or, as Peter puts it in **1Peter 5:10**, living the Christian life in faith, casting all anxiety on God and living an active life in opposition to the devil, will result in God restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing them

Conclusion

In the early years of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln became angered at the inactivity of Union commander George McClellan

He was so frustrated by McClellan’s inaction that he wrote his commanding general this one-sentence letter:

"If you don't want to use the army, I should like to borrow it for a while.

Respectfully,

A. Lincoln."

We are God’s “army” upon this earth and he expects us to be active

Still, Jesus was quite clear when he said in **John 15:5** that apart from him we can do nothing so we are to be dependent on him in humility and not trying to live the life of a Christ-follower in our own strength

This is no more true that when it comes to resisting the devil and his schemes

We would be powerless against such a formidable foe if not for God’s power channeled through us by his grace

Even so, the anxiety we often experience is real and it’s not without reason

But as we have seen today we are commanded to cast our anxieties on God and soldier on as clear-headed, vigilant warriors who resist him confident in the one who works through us

Passive Christianity that “let’s go and let’s God” isn’t biblical Christianity but dead Christianity because, as James makes clear, “*faith without works is dead*” [**James 1:17**]

So, give up on self-sufficiency and in humility cast all your anxieties on God and get busy

Because God has work for you to do and he will not only sustain you in this life but will also reward you for your faithful service in the end

Let’s pray

1Peter 5:6-10 (page1017)

6Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7**casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. **8**Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9**Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10**And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.