

**Sermon Brief**  
Andre Riendeau  
July 10, 2022

**Text:** 1 Peter 5:5-11

**Title:** “Don’t Be a Soft-Shelled Turtle”

**Subject:** Believers are to stand firm in faith during persecution.

**Complement:** Humility, spiritual vigilance, and worship enable us to stand firm.

**Textual Idea:** Believers are to stand firm in faith during persecution; humility, spiritual vigilance, and worship enable us to stand firm.

**Sermon Idea:** Don’t be a soft-shelled turtle! Get your spiritual garb on!

**Interrogative:** Are you a soft-shelled turtle?

**Key Points:**

Don’t be a soft-shelled turtle! Put on...

1. the apron of humility – cast your cares on God,
2. the armor of God – stand firm in your faith in God,
3. the garment of praise – receive God’s grace.

**What do I want people to know?** I want people to know that believers will face severe suffering for their faith in the world. To bear up, they need to be humble by casting their cares on God, resist Satan by standing firm in faith and be strengthened by God’s grace through gratitude and worship.

**What do I want people to do?** I want people to (1) cast their cares on God, (2) claim their spiritual inheritance, (3) give God praise.

**What need am I addressing?** I am addressing the need for the church to remain strong in times of great persecution.

## “Don’t Be a Soft-Shelled Turtle”

1 Peter 5:5-11

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I love animals. Don’t you?! They’re great! I especially love turtles and few things are cuter than a newly hatched, soft-shell turtle scrambling to get from the beach to the ocean. Take a look! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-MDhbl2Kw>

Phew! That was a close call! These poor turtles are vulnerable from the moment they hatch! Whether hungry seagulls looking to pick them off the beach or fish and other creatures once in the ocean, they’re vulnerable. Why? Because they have **(LCD) soft-shells**. They have the wrong clothing on for the dangerous world they’re born into. We’re born into a dangerous world too. In our passage this morning, we’re going to see several “spiritual seagulls” looking to pick us off as followers of Jesus. The lesson? **(LCD) Don’t be a soft-shelled turtle!** We need proper gear if we’re going to survive living for Jesus in this world. Turn to 1 Peter 5.

We’re in a sermon series on the book of 1 Peter which I’ve entitled, **(LCD) Alien Living in a Chaotic World**. The people Peter wrote to were struggling to live faithfully for Jesus in a pagan society. Last week, Peter addressed the elders, calling them to lead humbly. He now turns to the rest of the folks and makes some wardrobe suggestions! 1 Peter 5:5, *“In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”*

Peter starts by saying, “in the same way,” or “likewise.” A better translation might be “correspondingly.” Just as the elders have a responsibility before God to lead humbly, so the rest have a responsibility before God to submit humbly. Now, that doesn’t mean blind submittance! Like I said last week, our ultimate allegiance is to God. If the elders aren’t leading in a Christ-like way, then they need to be appropriately challenged. I like what Scot McKnight says, **(LCD) “If submission to elders were the only guiding principle, there would never have been a Protestant Reformation!”** Amen! But if the leadership is humble and leading by the Book, then the rest are to humbly submit to their leadership as the writer of Hebrews says, **(LCD) “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”** Again Wintonbury, you’re doing great at this! Let’s keep it up!

Peter continues, the second part of verse 5, *“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”* Peter now shifts to everyone, including the elders, and commands mutual submission. He also gives us our first wardrobe suggestion, *“clothe yourselves with humility.”* The word here, **(LCD) enkouboomai**, is a very specific word meaning **“to tie or put something on oneself.”** See this note, **“The word was also used of a slave who tied on an apron; then the idea may be that of wearing humility as a slave’s apron.”** It would make people think of Jesus’ footwashing. Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, put on the apron of humility, and served His flock. He then told them to do the same to each other. The apron of humility is essential to living for Jesus. Ben Witherington had a great insight on this, **(LCD) “The call for elders and the younger to mutual submission surely is a call to the whole community to submit and defer to one another in all humility. This changes altogether the character of the hierarchical relationships, though it does not obliterate the hierarchy altogether.”** There is still the hierarchy of elders and the sheep, but our relationship is clothed with the apron of humility, not of power grabbing. Our first point, **(LCD) Don’t be a soft-shelled turtle, put on the apron of humility.**

Now this is important for Peter to talk about because one of the “spiritual seagulls” that can take us out is pride. And that’s a seagull that God has no patience for...actually, it’s worse than that. In verse 5, Peter quotes Psalm 3:34, *“God opposes the proud but shows favor or grace to the humble.”* The word there for “opposes” is very strong. **(LCD) “Antitasso” is a military term** that depicts the orderly arrangement of troops to successively wage combat against the non-compliant. It is a deliberate, premeditated arrangement of military might to crush an enemy. It’s what Russia is trying to do to Ukraine...except that God doesn’t fail! You don’t want to set yourself up against God. He will actively oppose you, even if you’re His child, if you refuse to submit to His will and His word. Wow! So the apron of humility enables us not only to have good relations with those around us, but it also keeps us from being “antitassoed” by God Himself!

Verse 6, *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”* In light of how important humility is, Peter says the right response is to humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand, submit to Him and what He’s allowing to happen. God’s mighty hand is found throughout scripture. If we oppose Him, His mighty hand brings discipline like the snakes in the desert when Israel worshipped foreign gods. If we submit to Him, His mighty hand brings deliverance like when God split the Red Sea to save Israel from Egypt. Discipline or deliverance, your choice!

If we humble ourselves, get under God’s mighty hand, he promises to lift us up in due time. That means being willing to stay low, humble, until God says the time is right. Ever found yourself waiting forever for God and tempted to take matters in your own hands? About six months after I came to Christ, I did a mini-sermon. I realized then that preaching was what I wanted to do. I asked God to let me preach. That was 1983. It wasn’t until 2012 that I began my full-time preaching ministry. I can tell you...it was hard to wait. There were times when I’d sit here listening to Rich and think to myself, “I

could do a better job on that passage!” What pride! I was tempted to run off a few times, but God kept telling me to wait. It wasn’t easy...but I’m glad I did!

The reason I was able to wait was because I put on the apron of humility. How did I do that? Verse 7, “*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*” In the Greek, verses 6 and 7 are one sentence and verse 7 is the means of verse 6, it’s the how. How do we humble ourselves under God? By casting our anxiety on Him. This is what I did with my preaching desire. I cast it on Him. “Lord, I really want to preach, and it doesn’t look like it’s going to happen; but I trust You, I’ll keep being faithful right where I am until you say the time is right. Amen.” The verb for the command, **(LCD) “cast,” means “to put on; hurl; to place or put something on something else with great energy; conceived of as throwing on forcefully.”** Throw your anxieties on God. Why? Because He cares for you. Do you believe that? If we really believe He cares for us, has our best interests at heart, then we’ll let go of the things we’re anxious about. But if we’re not sure He’s for us, we’ll hold onto our stuff and run our own lives.

The tell-tale sign of whether we really believe God cares for us is...anxiety! The word here means, **(LCD) “A burden, load of trouble that comes from our lot in life.” It’s “the attempt to secure one’s material existence. The root word refers to that which monopolizes the heart’s concern.”** Anyone here deal with worry at all? Anything monopolizing your heart’s concern? I’ve got a few things monopolizing my heart’s concern, keeping me up at night. Look at these **(LCD) health issues** that arise from anxiety: muscle tension, difficulty relaxing, holding of bladder or bowels, physical pain, headaches, stomach pains, all the way down to sleep problems. Got any of those? I’ll tell you who doesn’t have any of these symptoms...**(LCD) do they look worried?** Jesus once said, “*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*” Cast your anxieties on Him because He cares for you...He really does! We’ll have a time to do that at the end of our service.

Having encouraged us to put on the apron of humility to defeat the “spiritual seagull” of pride, Peter warns us about another dangerous “spiritual seagull;” verse 8, “*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*” Satan picks off vulnerable believers just like seagulls pick off soft-shelled turtles. The word for “devour” here means to swallow with one gulp. Gulp! It’s used of the fish with Jonah. One gulp. It’s what Satan does to us when we’re spiritually asleep. Gulp! Remember anyone in scripture who fell asleep at a particularly inopportune time? **(LCD) Peter!** He’s got to have this episode in mind when he writes this. Satan is literally tempting Jesus and Peter’s getting shut eye! So Peter warns, “Be alert! Be awake!” Two commands back to back. We have a real, live enemy, the devil, who is out for blood. He isn’t fooling around. Peter compares the devil to a **(LCD) prowling lion.** **Wayne Grudem adds, “A prowling lion attacks suddenly, viciously, and often when its unsuspecting victim is engaged in routine activities.”** Routine activities: working, shopping, watching TV, reading, surfing the phone...this is when the devil lurks – waiting for us to be spiritually asleep – and then, gulp! One swallow! Gone!

Now with that all said, let me lend some balance as Scot McKnight suggests, **(LCD)** **“Though some Christians are a bit neurotic about the real presence of Satan and demonic forces in the normal struggles of life (like flat tires, long red lights, and bad prices at the supermarket), an overreaction that totally eliminates him from our lives is just as bad.”** We need to realize that there really is a devil, and he is a formidable enemy. But not everything bad that happens to us is because of him or his demons. Also, the Bible makes it clear that Satan is a creature and not the equal of God. We have nothing to worry about...as long as we stay close and constantly connected to Jesus. It’s what our brother Brett Carlson calls being “pre-prayered.” Being vigilant to stay connected to God through prayer and walking in step with the Holy Spirit – which takes us back to what Jesus said when he found Peter sleeping, **(LCD)** **“Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Don’t miss that “spiritual seagull” Satan circling over your head. Don’t be neurotic about it, but don’t miss it!

Now if he does come zeroing in on us, Peter has advice; verse 9, *“Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”* Ah! We’re not helpless against the devil. We’re commanded to resist him, and we do that by standing firm in the faith just like so many persecuted believers around the world have done – the family of believers. The Apostle Paul said essentially the same thing, **(LCD)** **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”** We can stand firm against Satan, but it can’t be with our soft-shells on! We need another wardrobe change – the armor of God. When my boys were little, they used to love wrestling with big dad. Right off the bat in the morning, while still wearing their superhero pj’s, they would attack me with screams and threats and blows to my body...all of which produced more laughs than hurts. They could attack me in their pj’s because I wasn’t really fighting them. But if I ever decided to really fight back, they would’ve needed serious equipment! Same with us. We need the armor of God to resist the devil.

You’re probably familiar with **(LCD)** **the armor of God.** There’s the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the feet of peace. All these enable me to stand firm in spiritual battle. Each of these are part of my inheritance as a child of God. Because I’m God’s child, I’m saved. Because I’m God’s child, I’m declared righteous. Because I’m God’s child, I’ve been given God’s truth. Because I’m God’s child, I’m a man of faith. Because I’m God’s child, I’m at peace with God. What Satan tries to do is to make us doubt these things about us. Standing firm in the faith means believing that all these things are true according to the Word of God.

**So (LCD) when the accuser says, “See, you’re a hypocrite! Calling yourself a Christian and yet doing that!” You can point to the breastplate of righteousness and say, “I’ve been completely forgiven by God!” When the doubter says, “You can’t**

**give ten percent of your income to God! That's crazy!" You can hold up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and say, "I do not worry about my life, my food or my clothes for my Father in heaven knows that I need these and will provide them for me."** Faith is believing God at His word and He says you have been given the armor of God as your inheritance as a child of God. Use it! Our second point, **(LCD) Don't be a Soft-Shell Turtle! Put on the armor of God!**

Finally, one more wardrobe suggestion, verse 10, *"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."* Suffering is going to come, but it is temporary, a little while. Plus, He promises the grace to get through it both now and in eternity. He promises to restore us, the word here was used of mending torn nets. He pours out His grace and restores us, mends our wounds, and makes us strong, firm, and steadfast. Four participles in a row – a way of emphasizing just how sure this promise of restoration is - God's going to make all things right beyond our wildest imaginations! This reminds me of the great messianic prophecy in Isaiah 61, **(LCD) "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."** This is a celebration of grace! God pouring out His goodness on those who would receive it! Amazing grace, how sweet the sound! God's grace can and will restore you so that you swap your spirit of despair with the garment of praise.

Which is exactly how Peter ends this section, verse 11, *"To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."* To Him, Jesus Christ, be the power forever and ever. Amen. Peter suggests to the persecuted believers that in the midst of their suffering, they put on the garment of praise. The martyrs have done this throughout church history, **(LCD) "The account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, in about A.D. 155 at Smyrna, says that he was martyred 'when Statius was proconsul but when Jesus Christ was reigning forever.'"** The martyrs declared His praises right to the end because they knew that Jesus was reigning forever. So good. Our third point, **(LCD) Don't be a Soft-Shell Turtle! Put on the garment of praise!**

Here's a **(LCD) summary**, then, of all Peter tells us here when we're suffering for Jesus. We have three enemies, "spiritual seagulls:" pride, Satan, and suffering. For pride, we are called to put on the apron of humility by casting our cares on God which means to give our worries to Him. For Satan, we're called to stand firm in our faith by putting on the armor of God meaning claiming our spiritual inheritance. For suffering, we're encouraged to receive God's grace in the midst of trial by putting on the garment of praise. Which of these do you need to put on? So let's apply this right now by putting on the apron of humility. Let me ask you, **(LCD) what burden are you carrying?** Give it to God. As we sing an old chorus, I encourage you to come to the front, kneel in submission to the God of all grace, and give Him your burden in prayer. Don't be a soft-shell turtle!