

# Anxious Hearts - Calm Hearts

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Trial; Suffering; God: Grace; Discipleship / 1 Peter 4:12–19; 1 Peter 5:6–11

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- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Risen and Ascended Lord. Amen.

We've all had anxious hearts over the last few months. Our anxiety has been caused by many things, with most of them related to Covid-19. The list is probably endless, but here are just a few: what if I get Covid, what if a family member or a friend gets Covid, will Covid kill me. I've lost my job. My retirement accounts have been obliterated. Financially I'm in ruin. Will my business come back once the Pandemic is contained? My social life is next to nothing; I can't see my friends, I can't see my family. A loved one died and I didn't get to say good-bye and we couldn't have a funeral. My sports season was cancelled. Will I get a job after graduation? My kids have been running me up a wall as I coordinate 4 zoom calls at the same time with 3 devices. Oh then there is the questions floating, is this a hoax, what about government over-reach? What about the constitution?

Many of us are close to our tipping point through this whole Pandemic response. We are at this point in our anxiety and despair for our own unique reasons. I've heard that it's been said, "We're all in the same boat." I don't believe that statement. I would say this, "We're all in the same storm, but our boats are different." Our trials and struggles are different.

We are being beaten up on all sides and it seems that it is natural to have anxious hearts during times of trial, tribulation, and suffering. Really that's what happens isn't it.

St. Peter in our text from 1 Peter 4 and 5 points us to a different type of suffering, a different type of trial. This type of suffering and trial is a spiritual trial. St. Peter writes as we heard:

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13

Spiritual trials could mean that you are being persecuted for Christ's sake. Maybe you've experienced this at school, at work, on the athletic field, on social media. Today this doesn't necessarily mean that you will face death for being a Christian. Spiritual trials can also be those times when the devil is attacking us in our weakness. Spiritual trials test us. These Fiery trials show us how weak and helpless we actually are. They reveal how utterly dependent we are on God and his grace and mercy, and how much we need the prayers of Jesus so that we may bear them.

When are in the midst of fiery trials we often find ourselves as Christians driven to the Word of God and prayer all the more, for this is where we receive hope, comfort, and peace. When we receive these words of hope and comfort and peace, only then can we rejoice in our sufferings. It is at this point in the hearing of the Word of God that we hear that we are not alone in our sufferings, Christ Jesus also suffered for us. We are not alone in our suffering because the Holy Spirit is upon us.

The life, the spiritual life of a Christian is secure in Jesus, even amidst our Anxious hearts. Peter then urges you to cast all our anxieties on Jesus, because He care for you. He urges us to trust our Creator to take care of us in all circumstances.

Yes, our lives, our spiritual lives our secure in Jesus through His, sufferings, death, and resurrection, but yet, Peter tells us that we must be watchful because the enemy, the roaring lion, the devil, seeks to rob us of our Easter joy and faithfulness to Christ.

Having the devil, the roaring lion, ready to pounce might cause you anxiety as well. Just knowing that he is lurking around every corner might cause you anxious hearts. It is also during these times of trial and suffering, during times of weakness and anxiety that you are more to prone to attack. St. Peter is urging you to "Resist him, firm in your faith..." Your faith is built on the firm foundation. The firm foundation is Jesus Christ and Him Crucified and Risen!

Here's the thing, we have a firm foundation, but yet, the devil is real. We have to remain vigilant with the devil being around and active. Maybe you have had a chance to watch a show about lions on a nature channel. Or maybe you have a yard cat. Watching these animals, you know that lions see their prey long before the prey is aware of it. The lion studies the movements and stealthily creeps along the tall grass until the prey is not paying attention. Then it springs forth and sinks its teeth and claws into its prey, putting the death grip of its jaws around the throat.

Now only be watchful, but resist Satan when he tempts you, Peter says, remaining firm in your faith. Hold onto the Word of God in your heart and use it as Jesus did during his temptations from Satan. Do not give up or let go of the Word for anything. And know that you are not alone. Not only does the Spirit of God rest upon you and go with you through your fiery trials...whether it's persecution for your faith or some other kind of suffering. There is suffering by fiery trial is experienced by your brothers and sisters throughout the world. Yes, you truly can, as Peter writes, "Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

I urge you to cast your anxieties on Jesus...he cares for you. Take them and leave them at the foot of the cross where He dies for you. There Jesus takes your burdens, your sins, your anxieties. There at the cross Jesus Christ says: "I love you, this is why I came. I came to die for you." Dear friends in Christ, Satan is not in charge. The world that serves as Satan's pawn is not in charge. Covid-19 is not in charge either. There are times that it may appear that way, but He, the Devil, and the world inflict all sorts of warfare on Christians. Jesus demonstrated that yes he is Lord of Lords.

After Jesus died on the Cross and was laid in the tomb. He rose for you and His first visit after He rose from the dead, before He walked out of the tomb is that He descended into hell to proclaim Resurrection Victory over Satan. It looked like Satan had defeated on the cross, but that didn't happen, Jesus laid it down on his own accord. What Satan intended for destruction, Jesus used for our salvation. When Jesus breathed His last, our sin was fully atoned. When He was buried, Satan thought he would be forgotten about. The Lord of Life though would not be contained, having destroyed the curse of sin, Jesus burst forth from the tomb,

swallowing up death and giving in its place everlasting life. He lives! He lives!  
Jesus Christ is alive!

Peter even proclaims:

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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. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Jesus Christ, the one who suffered, was crucified, died, buried and is risen from the dead and ascended is the only one that can change your anxious hearts to calm hearts. Jesus Christ is the one that takes your anxious hearts and turns them to calm hearts through his death and resurrection. He also turns your anxious hearts to calm hearts when you are grounded in the Word of God. He turns your anxious hearts to calm hearts as he says to “My Child, Your sins are forgiven.”

Remember back to the Easter experience of Mary...remember how fast her heart was changed when she saw her Lord. Remember how her anxious heart was changed to a calm heart when he spoke her name. The same goes for you. The Resurrection changes you. The Resurrection gives you calm hearts even in anxious times. The Resurrection gives you peace. The Resurrection gives you comfort. The Resurrection promises you your own resurrection from the dead one day.

What a promise that is. This is great joy knowing that even amidst anxious times our hearts can be calmed. He can also turn your hearts to calm by hearing these words, “Take, eat, this is my body; Take, drink, this is my blood.” Words that I pray we can hear corporately very soon.

May God continue to grand you calm hearts during these days as we look to Him for our source of strength, hope, peace, and comfort, knowing that he has already defeated the roaring lion, knowing that he has suffered so much more than you and has been raised to life and grants you life.

In Jesus Name. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen and Ascended Lord. Amen.