



For years actor Dennis Haysbert—with his baritone and assuring voice, along with Allstate Insurance—has reminded us about the perils of life. And after every moving commercial we are left wondering, “Man, am I in good hands?” The “good hands” campaign was very successful, propelling Allstate to the second largest personal insurance company in the world. I think Dennis did close to 80 commercials for Allstate and, by the way, he’s from San Mateo!

Allstate commercials hit a chord with the American people because we all want a life that is more safe, secure, and free from trouble. No one wants to be up a creek without a paddle. It is good to be in good hands. But, you can have really good insurance and still not be in good hands. Life is hard, unpredictable, and chaotic, and no amount of insurance can prepare you emotionally or spiritually for the inevitable “what ifs” of life. There will be times when the events in our lives take an unexpected and unpleasant turn and we will find ourselves exactly where we don’t want to be. I know for several of you, that’s exactly where you are this morning.

As the Apostle Peter closes out his letter to suffering Christians, he leaves them with an encouraging word and a message we deeply need to hear today: “You’re in good hands,” he says “because you’re in God’s hands, and God will never let you go.” How do we get into God’s hand? Better yet, how can we stay there? And what does it even mean to be in God’s hand? We’ll look at three things this passage teaches us about what it means to be in God’s hand.

**Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**

**Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 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.**

**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. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

**With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging**

**you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.**

**She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love.**

**Peace to all of you who are in Christ (1 Peter 5:6-14).**

### **You're in God's Hands**

#### **Humble yourself by casting all your anxiety on Him**

What does it mean to be in God’s hands? First, it means humbling yourself by casting all your anxiety on God. Anyone dealing with something that’s making them anxious? Anyone worrying about something? Every single one of us should have our hands up in the air! We all struggle with fear, worry and anxiety at different levels. How do we deal with it? Do we just pray and have more faith? Do we try to forget about it and pretend it’s not there? Peter gives us a powerful image that shows exactly how to deal with our anxieties, how to deal with the devil, and how to deal with suffering.

The image is God’s mighty hand. It’s a powerful metaphor that traces all the way back to Israel and their deliverance out of Egypt. God speaking to the prophet Moses through a burning bush says, *“I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go”* (Ex. 3:19-20). A few chapters later, God reminds Moses again of what he will do, *“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country’”* (Ex. 6:1). In the Old Testament God’s mighty hand symbolized discipline, power and deliverance. The prophet Isaiah put it beautifully, *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”* (Isa. 41:10).

To be in God’s mighty hand is a place of humility. Peter says, “Humble yourselves therefore under God’s mighty hand.” The call is to humble ourselves under God’s power, protection and deliverance. What does it mean to humble yourself and how do you do that? It means we need to be aware of where the power comes from. It’s God’s hand and his power, not yours. Humbling ourselves means we routinely confess sin, submit to authority,

receive feedback from others, serve people, be quick to forgive and have a grateful heart. Humility often means being willing to do good without getting any credit for it. It's being able to rejoice in someone else's success.

Peter zeroes in on one of the ways we can work at being humble. He says, "cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you." I like the word "cast" because it means to "throw" or "load," which is a decisive act on our part. We need to toss our worries as far out of our minds as we can. We need to drop them into the sea of God's mercy, grace, and loving care. When you do that, you are letting go of pride; you are humbling yourself.

This is hard! For some of us, it takes good counseling and maybe even medication to cast off our anxieties. There is nothing embarrassing about that. For the rest of us, we do this prayerfully and in obedience to Jesus' teaching who told us, "***Do not worry about your life! Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own***" (Matt. 6:25, 34). Instead of worry, stress and fear, we actively place ourselves in God's hand. We humble ourselves. We depend on God for help and not our own intellect, wealth, power or strength. We cast all, all, all our anxieties on him because he cares for you. And if we do that, God promises to lift us up and to honor us in due time. That means according to his schedule and not ours. Our responsibility is to humble ourselves and cast all our cares on him. God's responsibility is to care for us and lift us up in due time.

If you're like me, you have 99 problems and things to worry about right now. Some of them are really pressing on you while others are slowly creeping in. One by one, we need to make a spiritual decision and cast them as far as you can in God's direction. And when you do that, God promises to take care of them for you because he has promised to care for you. When you are in God's hands you don't have to let your worries consume you.

Just this week I had to do this. We got some discouraging news on Monday. And at that moment I had a choice to make. Would I freak out and worry or would I cast that onto the Lord and put it in his sovereign hands? My wife and I prayed about it and we sought the Lord. It took a few days, but God in his mercy gave us a peace about it and we moved on. What does it mean to be in God's hands? It means humbling yourself by casting all your anxiety on God.

### Resist the Devil

Second, it means we can resist the Devil and his schemes. Christians believe in the supernatural. We believe there is a devil and he wants nothing more than to destroy Christians. He is our enemy, our adversary, who has great power on this earth. Peter describes the Devil as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour and saves the last sentences of his letter to address him. Thankfully God has limited the Devil's power and activity. Yes,

he is a lion, but he is on a leash and the length of that leash is determined by the Lord. One of the ways he's tried to destroy the early church is by persecution and suffering. After this letter was written we know that Christians were thrown into lions' dens for the sick pleasure of the Emperor Nero.

How do we resist the Devil? Peter tells us to "Be alert and of sober mind." When a lion is on the prowl, the shepherd nor the sheep get any sleep. They are both alert and watchful. We too need to pay careful attention and not let our guard down. Peter tells us to "resist him, standing firm in the faith." The idea seems to be one of defense, not offense. We are not told to go around fighting the Devil and casting out demons in our free time. No, we are told to resist him by standing firm in the faith. So, we resist the Devil by continuing to trust God. We resist by believing God truly cares for us and will sustain us to the very end. We ignore his lies and accusations. No matter what suffering the Devil throws at us, our faith in Christ keeps us strong and secure. In Christ, we have the power to take our stand against the prowling and roaring lion.

There is a great old story I heard years ago about how lions hunt in the great African savannahs. As the herds eat their way across the plains, lions wait in the tall grass nearby, anticipating the chance to prey upon the grazing animals. In preparation, they send the oldest and weakest members of the pride away from the rest of the hunting pack. Having lost much of their strength and most of their teeth, the roar of the old lions are far greater than their ability to bite. The old lions go off and settle in the grass directly across from where the strong and hungry lions wait and watch. As the herd enters the area between the hunting pack and the old lions, the old lion's roar mightily. At the sound of the roaring, the herd panics. Blinded by fear, they turn and flee from the seeming source of danger. As they rush wildly in the opposite direction, they run right to where the strongest lions wait in the tall grass for dinner to arrive.

Because of this phenomenon, the phrase "Run towards the roar" became popular. Run towards the roar. If you run away from the roar, you'll run right into danger. But, if you run towards the roar, you'll actually run into safety. See, the Devil is like a roaring lion, but the Bible describes a much more powerful lion—the Lion of Judah, Jesus Christ. The prophet Joel said, "***The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel***" (Joel 3:16). When trouble, persecution, worry and tragedy coming roaring your way—which they will—trust God and run towards the greater roar. Run toward Jesus Christ.

You're in God's hand; cast all your anxiety on him. You're in God's hand; you can resist the Devil. Run towards the roar. And finally,

after you have suffered for a little while, God will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

### **He will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast**

What does it mean to be in God's hand? It's the place of restoration and strength. Have you ever made a bad investment? Like you bought some stocks at \$2000 and the stocks took a nosedive? A few days later it's only worth \$500, and all you can think about is how nice it would be to have the \$1500 back? One of the difficulties with suffering is that it often knocks us back from where we thought or where we wanted to be. You wake up one day and realize, this is not the life I had hoped for. And it's hard not to think about what could have been if we didn't lose that job, or get sick, or walk away from that relationship, or turn away from Christ for a season. We tell ourselves, "If only...if only...if only." Truth is, everyone loses ground from time to time. Everyone faces setbacks. But God has made another incredible promise in these verses: those setbacks are only temporary. Listen to Peter's words again, *"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."*

Peter uses four powerful synonymous verbs to describe what God will do for his people after they have suffered for a little while. These are promises we can take to the bank. Peter says, God will restore you. That means he will make you complete and put you back in order again. He will make things right. God will also strengthen you. That is an athletic term that means he will give you the muscle you need to do what you need to do. God will also make you firm. That means he will empower you. He will put you on a firm foundation, your feet will be on solid ground. You'll be steadfast and secure. God doesn't do this work overnight and sometimes we won't even see it in this lifetime. But, it's going to happen. If you believe this about your future, it will shape how you live today. If you trust that you are in God's sovereign hands, then whatever comes your way, you know God will use it for your good and for his glory. This leads to Peter's outburst of praise and worship in verse 11, *"To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

In light of all this, Peter says, "Stand up. Don't let yourselves be pushed around by the Devil or by the circumstances in your life. Be strong in your faith." Being strong in faith comes down to a simple decision: being strong is within your ability. Peter is not telling you to sing like Adele or shoot threes like Steph Curry; those things are beyond you. But this type of living isn't. Be strong. You can do it. Peter says in verse 12, *"this is the true grace*

*of God. Stand fast in it."* In other words, all Peter has said in this letter is meant to be a source of encouragement and a source of grace to them and to us. Yes, life is hard. Suffering sucks. But, count it all grace. You can get through anything in life because you are in good hands; you are in God's hands. He will lift you up. He will take care of you. And he will one day restore you.

This is a golf club, specifically a driver. In my hands, at best, I can hit the ball 250 yards. Most often it will not go straight, sometimes it immediately flies out of bounds! But, this same driver in the hands of Tiger Woods, made him the world's number one golfer for 683 weeks and has won him 14 major golf championships and millions of dollars. The difference is whose hands it's in.

This is a baseball bat. Even though I played high school baseball, this bat now sits by my bed giving me just enough security to fall asleep at night. But, in the hands of Buster Posey, it's given him a career batting average of .309, over 1000 hits, and three World Series Championships! Because it all depends on whose hands it's in.

A wood stick in my hand is helpful when I'm on a long hike, but a stick in the hands of Moses can part the Red Sea. It depends on whose hand it's in.

A slingshot in my hand might break a window, but in the hands of a little shepherd boy named David, it was a mighty weapon that slayed a giant and rallied a nation. Because it all depends on whose hand it's in.

A few fish and some bread in my hand might make a great fish sandwich for lunch. But, in God's hands, it will feed thousands.

Nails in my hand might make a birdhouse, but nails in the hands of Jesus gave forgiveness and salvation for the entire world. Because it all depends on whose hand it's in.\*

Where are your worries, hopes, and dreams? Where are your struggles, doubts and anxieties? Are they in your hands or God's? Place them in God's mighty hands because it all depends on whose hands they're in. You're in good hands because you are in God's hands!

\*Credit: Kenneth Ulmer

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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300 Piedmont Avenue | San Bruno, CA 94066 | 650 349.1278 | [www.cpcweb.org](http://www.cpcweb.org). Additional copies available on request.