

1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11 N.T. 120 (NRSV)

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

^{5:6}Humble 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.

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“Resistance Isn’t Futile”

Opening Prayer: Please bow with me in prayer. Almighty God, the world can be such a scary place. The forces of darkness are all too real. Draw us into your holy presence today and deliver us from evil. Be our God and make us your forever people. In Jesus’ Name we pray, **Amen.**

Introduction: It was seven years ago this past week that a tornado swept through Union City. It was small as tornado’s go, just an EF1. But its small size didn’t much matter if you were one of the unlucky few that found yourself in its path.

On Tuesday evening, May 28, 2013, that tornado cut a couple hundred yard swath directly through the center of Union City **sweeping along South Street,** crossing Main Street, and **heading up over** the old high school before splitting in two and disappearing into the night. One of the kids in the church’s youth group there, **saw the funnel cloud** churned all around her house on South Street toppling trees and snapping utility poles like toothpicks. **On that night,** mother nature reared her ugly head and none who saw the furry of her wrath will ever forget the sight. In the face of such an overwhelming force, the best anyone could do was cower in fear in our basements. From the midst of the twisted chaos you could almost hear that tornado taunting, ***“Resistance is futile, you will be assimilated.”***

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All you trekies out there will immediately recognize that as a line from the movie “*Star Trek: First Contact*,” about the Federation of Planets’ first encounter with civilization’s arch nemesis, the Borg collective. TV guide has listed the Borg as one of the greatest fictional villains of all time. But of course, who needs fictional villains **when we have a real-life villain** like COVID-19? **Anyway, the Borg** are the epitome of evil personified. They twist their way through the universe assimilating anyone and everyone in their path into their sinister collective existence. **When the Federation Star Ship “Enterprise”** first encounters the foreboding Borg cube, the collective issues this ominous sounding ultimatum:

{**Play Video: “We are the Borg.wmv” [0:18]**}

There are forces out there in the universe: not fictional forces like the Borg collective, **but real forces** like tornados, **and viruses, and even God’s arch nemesis** the Devil, that are totally overwhelming. In the face of such powerful forces we can feel so small and insignificant. All hope appears lost. **Yes, resistance just seems so futile.**

PAUSE

Move I.

There are times we do feel overwhelmed. We have an ideal in our minds of how life's supposed to be, but reality keeps coming up far short of our ideal. Our ideal involves having friends who stick with us through thick or thin, but reality is our ideals and our friend's ideals don't always seem to jive. The ideal is harmony and bliss, **but sometimes** the reality is discord and woe.

How many of you here have ever had a friend betrayed you? (Raise your hand.) You and your friend were supposed to hang out together and do something fun, but your friend disc you and hung out with someone else instead. Or you shared a deep dark personal secret with your friend, but they broke your confidence and blabbed your private business to the whole world. Or your friend promised to give you something, but they gave it to someone else instead. And it's not just one of your so-called friends who's doing these things, it seems like it's all of them. This is the realty of many people's lives. **And this is especially** the reality of many teenager's lives. You just want a nice peaceful life but sometimes all you ever seem to get is drama and more drama. This is the reality I see playing out in so many people's lives every day, **especially on Facebook**. It happens at school, it happens at work; it even happens at church.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard church people lament, if it could only be like back in New Testament times. If Christians could only be like those early New Testament Christians. If the church could only be like that early New Testament church. Usually when someone says this I just smile and node, **but what I'm** really thinking is, "***Have you ever read the New Testament accounts?***"

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The New Testament is full of stories of discord, strife, and our right betrayal, even among friends. **After all**, it was one of Jesus' closest friends, one of his original 12 disciples, who betrayed him to the Jewish and Roman authorities **for a measly 30-pieces of silver. How's the saying go? "With friends like that, who needs enemies?" **And it was one** of Jesus' inner circle, Peter **who denied even knowing Jesus** three times on that same night when Judas betrayed him. Jesus knows what it is to feels like to be overwhelmed. He was despised and rejected by men, including his friends, **no wonder** he was in such agony as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. **Even for Jesus** the reality of life came up far short of the ideal. **Yes, there are times in life when we do indeed feel overwhelmed.****

End I.

Move II.

But God has the power to overcome all resistance. “Our God is greater, our God is stronger. Our God is higher than any other.” **Jesus endured** betrayal by his friends, **crucifixion** by his enemies, **and even temptation** by the Devil, and remained faithful to the mission God sent him to do. **The question** each of us face is “*Will we do that same?*” Will we avoid giving in and keep on keeping on, even when the going gets tough?

Our Bible less today is a letter written by **Peter** to Gentile Christians living in Asia Minor. This is a region comprised mostly of modern day Turkey. For Peter this would be a foreign and exotic land. For the most part, the believers in Asia Minor were not Jewish. They were recent Christian converts **in an overwhelmingly pagan society**. Being a Christian in Asia Minor wasn’t easy. Family and friends ostracized these Christians. Over all, society as a whole was mistreating them and these Christians were feeling misunderstood. So, Peter writes to try to encourage them. Peter wants them to remain true to their faith in Christ Jesus, even though they were suffering because of that very faith. **And Peter doesn’t** just address this situation as a sociological or religious conflict, namely pagans verses Christians. **Rather Peter addresses** this situation for what it really is; a cosmological conflict, namely good versus evil—God versus the Devil.

In 1 Peter 5:8-9a (NRSV) Peter writes, “**Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith.**” What a terrifying image. **A lion is on the prowl** seeking to devour you. What do you do?

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Well, there are two broad ways to respond. **First**, you can offer active resistance. **You can do like** the United Federation of Planets did with the Borg in Star Trek. **You can lock on phasers** and photon torpedoes and blast your adversary with everything you've got. The Borg might have said, "*Resistance is futile*," but that didn't stop Picard, Riker and La Forge from hitting the Borg with their best shot. **Is that the kind of resistance** Peter is talking about here in 1 Peter 5:9?

I want you to recall another event from back on the night when Judas betrayed Jesus. When Judas came with the Roman soldiers and the high-priest's servants to arrest Jesus, what did Peter do? **Peter drew a sword** and cut off one of the high priest's servant's ears (John 18:10). And how did Jesus react? **Jesus said**, 'Peter, **"Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."** Matthew 26:52 (NRSV). **And then Jesus** miraculously healed the servant's ear. Active resistance isn't Jesus' way.

That brings us to the second way we can resist an adversary. **We can resist passively**. **We can run** from the lion. **We can take shelter** in the basement from the tornado. **We can hide** at home from the virus. And when we do that, what are we doing? Well as Peter said, when we resist, **we are standing steadfast in the faith**. We are counting on God to deliver us from evil. **God raised** Jesus from the dead. **God spared** the people of Union City from the tornado. **God's gonna deliver the world** from COVID-19. That tornado was powerful. That miniscule virus is powerful. The Devil is powerful too. **But our God does have the power to overcome all resistance.**

End II.

Move III.

So, resistance isn't futile. The Borg wanted the members of the United Federation of Planets to think "*Resistance is Futile.*" **And God's adversaries** what us to think that "*Resistance is Futile,*" too. **But it isn't.**

The engineer in me can't resist (and, yes, the pun is intended) to make the obvious electrical circuit analogy. **If you search the Internet** you'll find lots of people selling these t-shirts. Now, if you know anything about electrical circuits, the diagram on the t-shirt is flawed. **The diagram shows** a short circuit around the resistor. Current would have no problem flowing through this circuit, it just bypasses the resistor. But in fact you can make an electric current flow through pretty much anything **if you have a high enough voltage**. **How else** do you think lightning bolts jump between clouds and the ground? Air normally is a great resistor.

This is a more accurate t-shirt. **It's Ohm's Law** verse the Borg collective. Resistance equals voltage divided by current. Resistance is not futile. Anything that resist God, is ultimately gonna lose.

This a picture of a sculpture that hangs on the outside of a modern cathedral in William Shakespeare's hometown, Stratford-upon-Avon in England. **Next to this modern cathedral** are the haunting remains of a 15th-century cathedral the Nazis bombed on November 14, 1940. **As an on-going act of resistance**, the bombed out cathedral continues to stand as a place of worship to this day. **Next to the bomb out** cathedral is a modern cathedral completed in 1962. Donna and I got to visit both cathedrals when we were in England in 2005. **On the side** of the new Cathedral is a massive sculpture **depicting the** Archangel Michael defeating the Devil. Resisting God is futile, but resisting the Devil is not. Listen to these words from Chris Tomlin's Easter song "***I Will Rise:***"

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**Jesus has overcome,
and the grave is overwhelmed;
The victory is won,
He is risen from the dead.**

**And I will rise when He calls my name;
No more sorrow, no more pain.
I will rise on eagles' wings;
Before my God fall on my knees,
and rise.
I will rise.**

So yes, resisting evil is most definitely not futile.

End III.

Conclusion: In the face evil forces like tornadoes, and killer viruses, and even God's arch nemesis the Devil, resistance can indeed seem futile. **Yes, there are times in life when we feel overwhelmed.** Life as we have known it has been upended. Jesus has been betrayed for a measly 30-pieces of silver. **But our God does have the power to overcome all resistance.** God raised Jesus from the dead. God spared the people of Union City from the tornado. And God's gonna deliver the world from COVID-19. **So yes, resisting evil most definitely isn't futile.** Jesus has overcome, and the grave is overwhelmed. The victory is won! All thanks be to God, ***“Resistance Isn't Futile.”***

Closing Prayer: Let's pray. O God, thank you for giving Jesus the victory over sin and death. Because of Jesus, resistance is never futile. **Amen!**

Sending Forth: Is life overwhelming you? Are you ready to give up in despair? Then count on Jesus for the strength to resist. Go forth and remember, resistance truly isn't futile. **And all of God's people said... Amen!**