

## Hope in Sovereign Grace

### 1 Peter 5:10-11

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I'll begin today by simply reading Scripture and our text from 1 Peter 5.

*"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. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."* (1 Peter 5:6-11 ESV)

We are in the final stretch of our study of 1 Peter. We have spent many weeks in this section of Scripture because we all need more humility, prayer, and awareness of our real enemy Satan.

Those are the glamorous points in this passage and we do well to remember what God has taught us. It would be easy to view verse 10 as an afterthought. It doesn't stand out like a lion or God exalting us. Frankly, I didn't expect to do a whole message on verse 10. However, I am convinced that Peter meant for verse 10 to be the anchor to all these other very well-known and quoted verses.

There is some irony and humor here. Do you see it? *Cast all your anxieties on him! He cares for you!* In the very next verse he says, *beware of the lion!* Peter, if you want me to get over anxiety, could you not bring up the fact that Satan is a lion wanting to devour me?

It's like on a flight when the pre-flight recording is playing and it is about the things that could go wrong. *In the unlikely case of a water landing, your seat cushion is a flotation device. Should the cabin loose oxygen, oxygen masks will fall from the ceiling. Place the mask over your face and breathe normally.* Really? If the plane is plunging to the water, I'm supposed to breathe normally? Those two don't go together in my book. Neither does being free from anxiety with God's sworn enemy hunting me down.

How can we possibly live without fear if a spiritual war is swirling around us and circumstances are threatening to overwhelm me? The anchor truth is found in verse 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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."* (1 Peter 5:10-11)

*"And after you have suffered a little while."* Peter begins by repeating something he has already said about Christian suffering—all of it is temporary. He said this in 1 Peter 1:6, *"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials."* A little while. Peter is comparing durations here. You might say, *but the duration of my trial has been much of my life. Or this heartache has been going on for years.* We normally compare the duration of our trial to the span of our life. A 10-year trial

is a significant percentage. Peter isn't comparing our trial to our lifespans. He's comparing it to eternity.

This life is fleeting. As James says, we are a vapor, here and then gone (James 4:14). Anything in this life is experienced for "a little while." When you are in a trial, it seems like it will never end. We think it's always going to be this way.

But Christians live forever. And in comparison, someday everything we went through in this life will seem very brief. Paul calls them, our light and momentary trials. (2 Corinthians 4:17) When we are suffering, like the Blackburn family, and the Raynor family, and the country of France, these seem neither light nor momentary. But Scripture sees time and trial through the lens of redemption. In the grand plan of God and all he has for us forever, by comparison, we only suffer for a little while.

That's helpful, but when we are in the trial we need a more immediate help. Tomorrow being better gives hope, but I need something today. Peter urges us to find help in our present trials by hoping in God's sovereign grace. "*The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*" (1 Peter 5:10)

At first glance we may not realize that this verse brings us one of the great mysteries of God. How is God sovereign over salvation when we are responsible for obedience? Or, how does God keep the redeemed redeemed? The saved saved, when the exhortations of Scripture make it clear that we have a role in this, yet God is sovereign over it?

Peter has exhorted us to do many things in this letter. Don't live like the pagan world. Crave the milk of God's Word. Respect those in authority over us. Win unbelievers to Christ by the example of our lives. And many other things. If you pull all those exhortations out and make them a to-do list, what happens? We all get depressed or we all become performers trying our very best to stay saved.

The mystery is human responsibility and the sovereignty of God. The grounding of our faith cannot be our doing; it must be in God ultimately. Charles Spurgeon was once asked how he reconciled God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. He said, "*You don't have to reconcile friends.*"<sup>1</sup> Especially in the midst of suffering, how does my faith persevere when life sometimes hurts so much?

## **Rest in the Sovereign Grace and Call of God**

*"The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ."* (1 Peter 5:10)

God's grace is God's favor, and God's goodness sovereignly and freely given to us. God is the God of all grace. There is no limit to his grace. It is an infinite grace. He has all that we could ever need. He won't run out. He doesn't need to ration it. His giving it to others doesn't diminish what he has for me. He is the God of all grace.

*"Who has called you."* The calling of God is God's saving initiative in us. He summons us to faith in Jesus. It is his guarantee to begin and complete his saving purpose in us. You see that here. He doesn't say, *God called you to initially believe* (which he did) or *God has called you to suffer* (which he has). It says he has called us "*to his eternal glory in Christ.*" Future grace. Eternal grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, as quoted in *The Company of Preachers*, Vol. 2, p. 584.

He has called us and committed himself to the ultimate outcome. It's one thing for God to commit to us starting the race, but this is God's commitment to our finishing the race. This is us in heaven and someday on the new earth. This is eternal life and eternal joy and presence with God.

- *"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6)
- *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* (John 14:1-3)

God's effectual call begins the work of salvation in us. But God's calling is not just the beginning but also the middle and end. Being called to glory is God's guarantee that every single genuine believer in Jesus will persevere in the suffering and the trials. The grace of God called us. The grace of God sustains us. The grace of God completes our salvation.

There is another marvelous truth in here. We are called to *his eternal glory in Christ*.

*"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed."* (1 Peter 5:1, emphasis added)

What are we called to exactly? Glory. But see that we *partake* in the glory. Let's just say God said, "I'll sustain you so that someday you will be like Moses and see my glory." It would be wonderful to see the glory of God. Or let's say that God said, "I'll sustain you and you'll get to be *near* my glory," like Peter, James, and John at the Mount of Transfiguration. That would be wonderful to be *near* the glory of God. We are given the eternal privilege of *partaking* in the glory of God forever. Not just seeing it or being near it, but being invited into the glory itself.

*"And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."* (Romans 8:17)

What is this like, being glorified with him? Partaking in the glory itself? Our Crown Point campus is a host site for the Northwest Indiana Symphony classical concerts. A couple years ago they asked me if I would be part of one of their concerts by narrating a famous symphony named *Peter and the Wolf*. I agreed, even though I wasn't sure what *Peter and the Wolf* was. Just being honest. It was a great experience and the symphony folks couldn't have been nicer. The thing I remember about that was the experience of hearing a symphony sitting in the midst of the symphony on our stage. I was surrounded by the musicians. I had the first chair violinists right next to me. I was surrounded by the musicians and surrounded by the music. It's one thing to see a symphony. It's one thing to hear a symphony. It's another thing to be in the midst of a symphony. Absolutely beautiful.

I think that is what Peter is encouraging us with here. God has called us and guaranteed that someday we will not simply be at the concert of God's glory. We won't simply see his glory or hear his glory. Ours is the privileged place in Christ to eternally be in the midst of it. To partake of it. Not that we are God any more than I was the first chair of the symphony. But the beauty and wonder of God's glory will be experienced by us personally forever.

But we still haven't answer the question, *how does God keep us in his grace? Especially when life is hard, how does God keep us from giving up or walking away?*

### **Trust in God's Promise to Sustain Us**

"...will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (1 Peter 5:10)

There are four key action verbs in verse 10. *Restore. Confirm. Strengthen. Establish.* When do we need each of these actions?

<i>Restore</i>	<b><i>When I have fallen</i></b>
<i>Confirm</i>	<b><i>When I am in doubt</i></b>
<i>Strengthen</i>	<b><i>When I am weak</i></b>
<i>Establish</i>	<b><i>When I am slipping</i></b>

Do you see how these are ideally suited to our struggles when life hurts?

- Anyone fall this week? God can and will restore you.
- Anyone in doubt this week? God can and will confirm your faith.
- Anyone feeling weak? God provides strength.
- Anyone feel their hope slipping? God will re-establish your faith again.

Now what strikes me here is who it is writing this. Someone who knows a little bit about how God restores, confirms, strengthens and re-establishes us. The famous betrayer and denier himself, Peter! Peter who fell so far when Jesus needed him most. Peter who ran out of the courtyard and wept bitterly. Imagine his shame and despair. *Jesus will never forgive me. Jesus will never want me around him again. Jesus has given up on me.* It was the dark night of Peter's soul.

This is the same Peter who heard the sweet words of Jesus re-affirming and restoring, "*Do you love me?*" Peter says, *Yes, Lord; you know I love you.*" Then three times Jesus says, "*Feed my sheep.*" (John 21:15-19) Three denials. Three restorations.

Christian, I don't know how far you've fallen or the doubts of your heart or the weakness and slippage of your faith, but this we know from Scripture and the testimony of the Apostle Peter—God is a God who sustains his people even in our failings. He promises to carry on his work of salvation in us and to bring us to glory.

### **Being Confident in the Power of God**

"*To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" (1 Peter 5:11)

Dominion means power or authority. "*To him be the dominion*" may sound like Peter is praying that God would have the power. The "be" can be translated "is." *To him be or is the power forever and ever.* One translation (HCSB) says, "*dominion belongs to him.*"<sup>2</sup>

There is no uncertainty regarding who is really the power behind and above everything. Yes, there is a lion on the prowl, a roaring lion. Satan is very, very powerful. *But he's no God.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville Tennessee. All rights reserved.

Anxieties and worries can seem so powerful, but our emotions *are no God*.

The world and society can make us feel like exiles in our country, but the president is no God. Hollywood is no God. American culture or opinion isn't God.

The forces set against the Christian are formidable and in a week of death, and murder, and terror, all their sordid power combined is no equal to God.

For the Christians suffering in this world, we are confident that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4). All dominion belongs to him.

Scripture rests confident in the power of God. Christian songs tell us this:

### **This is My Father's World**

*"This is my Father's world.  
O let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world:  
Why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring!  
God reigns; let earth be glad!"<sup>3</sup>*

### **A Mighty Fortress is Our God**

*"And though this world, with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God has willed  
his truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure,  
for lo! his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.*

*That Word above all earthly powers  
no thanks to them abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours  
through him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill:  
God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever!"<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Maltbie D. Babcock, *This is My Father's World*, 1901.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther (1529), Translator: Frederick H. Hedge (1852), *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*.