

Series: Different

Sermon #9

Seize the Suffering for Eternity

1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- November 14, 2021

Good morning, Grace! It's good to be back standing. Real quick I wanted to say that starting next week you're going to want to be here. The Mosaic service is a fully interactive service. We take the chairs off the floor here and we'll worship with the physical expressions of taking communion, having our prayer walls and thanksgiving walls set up. It's a beautiful experience and we do it about every two years. Don't miss that.

And that's going to lead us into the Christmas service here at Grace. Man, it's a great time to be at Grace. So, please clear your schedules and be here on Sunday.

I wanted to give you an update on my physical health. I've been dealing with a thing called Meniere's disease for over thirty years and we've backed into the place where it's a point of no return. So, they're going to go in and make a hole in the skull here behind my ear and then go in and cut the nerve—the balance nerve that's been throwing me out of whack for quite a while. So, I would love your prayers that we could actually do this this week. It looks like the brain surgeon could be available, and we're trying to get a couple of other surgeons in the room so it can be done the right way. (I only want to do this one time!) So, I'd appreciate your prayers that that surgery would be successful and the end of this thing I have going on.

Today—I didn't get to preach last week, and the last two chapters of 1 Peter is what we're looking at, if you'll turn to Chapter 4. I kind of made the last two sermons into one. So, brace yourselves—I'm kind of coming at you fast with lots of content. He ends with a climatic explanation of life and living as a Christian. So, here we go—it's a two-for-one Sunday.

Introduction

When I was in high school a number of my friends started amateur boxing. It was and still is called Golden Gloves. And in San Antonio, at least back in those days, that was one of the

top boxing towns in the entire country. There were some very good gyms there. And one of my better friends, Russell, would have me come over to his house to have me help him train.

Now Russell was about two or three (at least) weight classes above me, and so, it wasn't fair. And to make it fair, what he would do is that I would wrap up and then glove up, and then he'd just put his hands behind his back and then say, "I want you to hit me as hard as you can for as long as you can." And that seemed to make it even. But I've got to tell you that three three-minute rounds are a lot longer than you might think. I nearly tapped myself out with that. But I think I won every time we fought.

And listen—this is a great story, because this is how it ends—Russell won the Golden Glove championship for the state two years in a row. I think I might have had a little something to do with that.

So, what was Russell doing? Why would he tell a friend to hit him in the face as hard as he can for as long as he can? Well, Russell was trying to learn how to take a punch and not blink. He had to learn how to be punched without reacting to the punch. Because Russell was going to the very best gym in town. That coach was internationally ranked when he was a professional fighter. He knew a lot about the sport of boxing. He told all of his boxers this fundamental truth. He said, "You guys are going to get hit in the face. It's boxing. You can count on it. So, you have to learn how not to blink when you get punched in the face. That's how you do it. You brace for it."

1 Peter 4:12

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.

And oddly enough, that's today's lesson. Look what Coach Peter says. He says, "My beloved" --my good friends—"do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes you to test you ..."--You're going to get punched in the face—"... as though something strange were happening to you."

Here's Peter, an internationally ranked apostle. He's telling us, *I'm kind of a coach in Christianity. I've specialized in a lot of that myself.* And Peter's coming in here and he's telling

us, *You've got to change your perspective on persecution. Oh, it's going to happen. You just need to brace for it.*

Look, you can go all the way back to the inception of the sport, the inventor of Christianity, Jesus—the greatest of all time! What did He tell us about the nature of Christianity? What did He say? In John chapter 15 he says, “They hate you? That’s because they hated me first. They persecuted me; they’re going to persecute you.”

Jesus comes in and says, *Hey, I'm going to start this thing called Christianity. I want you to know, right at the get-go, it's a full contact faith. It's coming. They persecuted me, they'll persecute you.* So, that’s how this works. It’s how you know you’re in the game.

And if you look at the context of 1 Peter, you can see that he’s writing this group of people that are first-century Christians, and they’re being persecuted—extreme threats, accusations, lies, being torn away from their families, even killed. And Peter comes in and says, *Hey, friends, my beloved. Hey, the art of the Christian life is not trying to figure out a way to avoid persecution, but rather, how to respond to it.* It’s not about avoiding; it’s about how to respond to it. We have to change our entire perspective on suffering for the Lord and suffering persecution. And what he wants us to do is he wants us to see that there’s a plan in this and there’s a purpose for it, and God is in charge of all of it. And it’s because of that that Peter is going to join Jesus and Paul and James and say, *Look, about this suffering and trials—be encouraged. You should absolutely rejoice at this opportunity.*

And so, Peter’s going to bring in this perspective. And he starts it off at the very beginning of the epistle itself. That’s why the introduction is so effective, the little bumper that we show, because he’s telling us that the way to make sense out of this change in perspective on persecution is to start here.

Review: This World Is Not Our Home

So, at the very beginning of the book, chapter 1, just to review, he says, *Look, it's all about identity: who you are, who you're claiming to be.* And Peter says declaratively at the beginning, *You're different, like Jesus.* He says, *You're an exile. You're not from here.* He says we are aliens like Jesus. We’re going to serve a different kingdom; we belong to a different

kingdom. We have a whole different set of values. We have an authority that we surrender to that is not of this world.

So, do you feel like you're a fish out of water, just having a hard time breathing? Good. That's the way you're supposed to feel, because you're not from here. He's saying that Christianity is a full contact sport—yeah, you're going to get punched. So, just learn how to do it. You're supposed to feel strange here. And the people aren't going to like that. They're going to hate you for it.

And so, he's going to give us this little paragraph, and in this section, I want you to listen for, in the context of this suffering, how Peter's going to say, *Look, there's a sovereignty of God in this. And there's a purpose in what we go through.* And then, listen for the close, intimate presence of God as we read through the passage. I'll explain in just a minute, but here's the big passage.

1 Peter 4:12-14, 16, 19

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 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

In chapter 4, verse 12, he says, "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. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that very name." Verse 19—here's the one to remember. Memorize this.

“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Four Benefits of Suffering

The passage here is changing this perspective on persecution. In this section, Peter is going to come in and give us four reasons why we might find ourselves rejoicing in suffering. He’s going to give us four benefits of suffering. He’s going to say that there are four ways the Christian life works better because of persecution. Actually, there’s experiential truth that’s going to be talked about here, and that is if you experience suffering for the Lord’s sake—persecution, that is—you can’t have certain things unless God allowed those persecutions to happen. You would ask God to bring them on you. That’s how this change in perspective is.

1. Suffering Refines Our Character

1 Peter 4:12

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.

So, the first benefit that you get from persecution is found in verse 12. It refines our character. Verse 12 says, “Beloved”—there it is again, affection--*My loved ones*—“...do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” So, he says, *Don’t be surprised*. The word means “bewildering astonishment.” *What? This can’t be happening! Or maybe I’m doing something wrong!*

And Peter’s saying, *No, suffering is not an accident; it’s an appointment. It’s all part of this plan*. And as a matter of fact, in this epistle, because that’s the theme of it, this is the third time Peter has talked about being persecuted and about suffering for Christ. Because what he’s saying is that it’s a vital part of the Christian experience. You’re a citizen in heaven. You’re going to be misunderstood, you’ll be reviled, you’ll be insulted, you’ll be disliked. People can’t make sense out of you, so they’re just going to just make stuff up and treat you harshly. And

Peter says, *It means you're in the ring.* That's what it means to be a player. That's what it looks like.

And then, Peter says, *Don't be surprised about the fiery trial*--that even showed up in the intro video. Fiery trial is probably referring to a refining fire. It's easy to go to a goldsmith. It's a thing that lot of people would have had in common when they read this. A goldsmith would purify gold by putting raw gold, I guess, into a vat, and that goldsmith would heat it up. Because of the density of gold, it goes to the bottom, and then the impurities are raised to the top. Those are the things that aren't pure gold. And that goldsmith would scrape those off and put them over there. And then he's done.

He is NOT done. Then he has to turn the fire up a little hotter, and then more impurities come up, and then after those two times, you're done. No, then he does it again. And this goldsmith is going to continue to do this until he can look down at that gold and he will see his reflection as though it were the mirror itself. And that's what the refining fire is. God in His sovereignty places us in situations and circumstances where He turns up the heat, and then we see that, and He takes that off, and He's going to keep doing that until we're becoming like Christ in all of life and He sees the reflection of Jesus in us.

And so, Peter is just saying, *Don't be surprised when this happens.* You can expect it, but expect it with a purpose.

A beautiful quote says, **“God doesn't waste our suffering, and neither should we.”** And the refining fire brings out the worst in us. Don't be afraid of that. The refining fire brings out the worst in us so that God can make the best of us. That's how we find Him working in our life.

2. Suffering Allows Us to Identify with Christ

1 Peter 4:13

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

The second thing that persecution does is that it allows us to identify with Christ. We get to share and we rejoice because we're suffering with Him. In verse 13, he says, “But rejoice

insofar as you share in Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed." Two times it says to rejoice in suffering. Really? I mean, this sounds a little masochistic, but it's not. He's saying, *Look deeper. Look past you*. He's not saying to rejoice in the suffering itself; rejoice in who you get to share suffering with. There's a deeper fellowship with Christ.

I mean, think about this. Can you really relate to Jesus, the God-man, perfect without sin? I don't know—I want to gravitate towards Peter or somebody who's not so God-man perfect. How do you relate to Jesus? Have you suffered, been ridiculed, rejected, had extreme temptations, accusations, lies, been rejected even by family? Well, so did Jesus. So, you can relate to Him, because He has related to you.

And suffering and persecution are one of the tangent points between heaven and earth. It's a tangent point. Remember math, what a tangent point is? It's that exact place where a line hits a curve and those two places touch. The point is this: the goal of Christianity, the thing of Christianity, is that we would know and experience and enjoy a relationship with the transcendent, most holy God. How can that happen? It doesn't happen much. It happens in two places. It happens when heaven reaches down and descends to earth. And then, there are times when earth crawls its way, climbs its way, to the top to see what heaven might be like. Those two places, where heaven is coming down and earth is going up—it's joy, and it's sorrow. Those are the two tangent points.

And how do you know when you're having those experiences? You cry. Because we don't know what to do with ourselves when we're that close to heaven and heaven is that close to us. So, we cry—it just comes out. Joy is when earth reaches up to heaven. *What's it like up there? I miss home so badly*. And occasionally in our lives we'll have an experience—sometimes it's just nature—a sunset at the Grand Canyon—and you lose your breath and you cry and say, *Is this a little bit what it's like?* That's joy. The birth of a child ... or a grandchild ... and you cry, because you don't know what to do. This is a little bit like heaven. That's joy.

And then there are times when heaven bends, stoops, goes beneath itself and touches earth and says, *I know what you're like*. And that happens when the triune God that doesn't have to do this relates to us in suffering and sorrow and loneliness and hardship and persecution. Know this to be true—that God has gone to great lengths. Those great lengths: the gospel story itself—so that He can relate to us, so that we can relate to Him.

And I'd love a life with nothing but joy. But that's only half the places where earth and heaven touch. The other half is this. And you'll listen to stories, friends. In the context of persecution, literally in jails, sometimes being burned alive, you'll hear people say, *I have never felt closer to my King in my entire experience.* Why is that? Because it's sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

Again, the bigger plan, the timeline that Peter has in these books, is that He's coming soon. This is short. Look at the last part of verse 13. It says, "...that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed." We will rejoice and be glad because we're looking forward to the end of this story. Peter's a coach looking at you and me in between rounds, and we're kind of getting pummeled. And coaches in the corners don't say, "Okay, you only have eleven rounds left." They don't say that kind of stuff. They say, "Just hang in there, man. Three more minutes and then we'll see what we're going to do next." He's telling us to just keep fighting. Because here's the thing: he's saying that at the end of this in another twelve minutes, we'll do post-fight interviews, and you don't want to go into that interview with any regret. Peter is saying that you do not want to enter eternity with regret. You could've stayed longer, you could've fought harder, you could've learned how to not blink.

Romans 8:18

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

He's saying, "Come on, make the most of this." Because later on, this suffering, in retrospect, is nothing. Paul literally says this: "I consider our present sufferings are not worthy in comparison with the glory that will be revealed in us later." *So rejoice and be glad*, he says. We're going to be greeted by Christ in end times, and Jesus might say, *You've got a spear in your side? I had a spear in my side. We have similar scars. Yeah, cool story.*

3. We Receive God's Blessing When We Suffer

1 Peter 4:14

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Persecution refines us. Persecution connects us to Christ in ways we couldn't otherwise connect to our King. And it says here in verse 14 that we're also blessed by God. Look what he says: "If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God is going to rest upon you."

The punches are coming—that just means you're in the ring. There's the word—there's my word—insulted. That kind of jumped off the page when I read it. It hurt. I don't know. I blink at "insulted" a lot. It means literally being rejected by society. It's that snicker in the classroom when you bring up something about the Bible, or it's the rolling of the eyes in the boardroom (*Oh, here's the ethics guy coming up again*), or maybe just in your neighborhood when you get the cold shoulder or are disinvited or are actually rejected by people because they know you're a follower of Christ and you enjoy your church life.

And Peter's saying, *No, no, that rejection and being insulted is a blessing*. And I think for me, the insulted thing is where—sorry, just a little background—this is me—this is where I blink. I'm forty years into the faith (actually more than that), I'm kind of old, I thought I'd be over some things like this. But one of the values I have in my life is that I don't want to be a Christian where all of my friends are in this church. I want to make sure that I have a lot—not a lot—but a few good friends outside the church that don't know Christ. I want to be in Austin, but not of Austin. And what I've found because of the commitment to be that way, is that I really want to be liked, even at sixty-whatever. And I feel like I need to be respected. And I don't know how much I'm willing to pay for that until I pay too much. And I blink. I say too much or I don't stand up for something or I actually do something wrong, and I'm thinking, *What just happened there? Why did you blink this time again? Why do you need the respect, why do you want to be liked so much?*

And so, is that failure? I'd say, maybe—no, it depends. If I choose to learn from it, if I choose to realize why I did that, and if I say, *I'm never going to fail that way again*, then I can move on and learn something from that.

There's a critical point here about staying with the fight. Because there's a choice: you can just blend in. The point here—it says here that “the spirit of glory and God rests on you.” That's how you're blessed. You're blessed by the spirit of the glory of God resting on you. And “rest” there means “bring refreshment.” That's the literal meaning of it. And this is the experiential truth. This is the part of the passage where you have to be insulted, you have to be rejected for the claims of Christ, you have to have that projection of shame thrown on you, and then what are you going to do with that? Because when you get back to your room and you're all by yourself and you're feeling the bruises—you're making that choice in that moment. Sometimes you're crying because you feel all alone. And sometimes people will say, *I will not be embarrassed for my faith again. I'm tired of blinking and I'm tired of getting punched. I don't want this anymore, and so I'm either going to blend in or I'm checking out altogether. But that's it.* There's no peace there.

There's another time when you're lying in that same bed and you're listening to Peter now, and you're realizing, *You know what? I should expect these things. And these are good things, because they are refining my character. I just had some very bad things brought out in me with this heat. You know what? In the context of this, I feel like I'm connecting with Christ in a different way. And so, I don't care. I'm staying with Christ, I'm staying with the values, I'm surrendering to His lordship, His authority, and I'm just going to leave it there.*

Wait for it ... and then the Spirit—it says right there—“And then the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” That's why he says you're blessed. You're blessed because the spirit of God and glory rests on you. And when that happens in that bed, you are emboldened and encouraged and you sleep a good night's sleep. It only happens if you're been punched.

4. Our Suffering Glorifies God

1 Peter 4:19

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

The last thing he says here in the four things is that it glorifies God. Suffering in His name: “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian”—some translations say “if you suffer in His name”—I love that—keep that in mind—“... let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that same name.”

Shame--there it is. Satan’s goal is to make you ashamed to be associated with that name, that branding. *Oh, you’re with Him.* And what Peter is saying here is, *Don’t be ashamed of that name. Be proud of that name.* God is glorified when you put your chest out and say, *Yeah, I’m with Him.* In many respects, it’s somewhat the history of the faith. Peter is saying, *Don’t put your head down. If they call you those names, just look up and look them in the eye.* Let them see you hear what you’re being called by them.

The word “Christian” is a derogatory term at its inception. *Oh, those are the Christians, the Christ-followers.* And the Christians said, *I kind of like the way that looks. Yeah, you can call me that.*

Later on, the Puritans, famous for their purity and their integrity, were being made fun of. *Look at those Puritans.*

Yeah, let’s make a denomination out of it.

That’s what he means by “don’t be ashamed.” Don’t be ashamed—it glorifies God.

Let me remind you that the mood of this whole epistle is that we’re running out of time, that the end is near. You don’t have to do this for very long. And so, because we’re running out of time and there’s not much time left, Peter is saying, *Seize this suffering, because in the next life you don’t have a chance to do anything with suffering. It won’t happen.* Seize the suffering, because suffering will refine your character. It brings out the worst in you so that God can bring out the best in you. Seize the suffering because you identify with Christ in a new way. You will receive God’s blessing. It glorifies God. Don’t miss this. Those are the four principles or attitudes that we need to change.

Summary: Seize the Suffering

1 Peter 4:19

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

And so, now what's interesting is that now what Peter's going to do is answer the deeper question. That's good, that's great, there's some blessing in this. But why suffer at all with a sovereign God in control? And Peter answers the question by saying, *Well, let's look at the nature of God himself.* Look what he says in verse 19. This is the summary verse. "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

Wow. Yahweh God, the Creator, who is a faithful Creator—we're supposed to entrust our souls completely to Him while we keep doing good. Why? Because it's all according to His will. That one sentence summarizes everything. God's permissive will is allowing us to suffer, and we don't have to necessarily know why.

Joni Erickson knows a few things about suffering. She writes about this: "God allows what He hates to accomplish what He loves."

So, the big why—why is there suffering, why is there evil, why do you get punished for doing right? Why? The answer—I don't know. Peter says, *I don't know. But what I do know is the nature of God, and I'm going to go to that instead.*

And he says that He's a faithful Creator. It starts off with "faithful." Look how Peter is not saying, *You stay faithful.* No, he says, *God is going to stay faithful to you.* Peter ought to know. Peter's the denier. And look what happened because of God's faithfulness to Peter. Peter stays in the faith, Peter writes two epistles on persecution—Peter the denier. That's because of the faithfulness of God, the faithful Creator.

Peter goes to Him, calling Him the Creator. This is the only time in the New Testament, by the way, that God is called the Creator. And it's saved for this particular time, this particular subject. Why? Because this is not an easy thing to do—enjoy and rejoice in suffering and persecution. And so, God is showing himself here as the Creator, which means He's in control, He's overseeing, He's in charge of every single subatomic string in the entire universe. When He

says, “Sit,” they stay. And he’s appealing to that, because the biggest, the hardest, the scariest, the most daunting expectations of faith-filled living in the Bible are answered by God saying to some saint, *I know. You can’t figure this out. So, why don’t we just go outside and night and gaze at some stars, and then just see what happens.* That’s what He does.

Isaiah 40:26

Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of His great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.

God literally does this with Job when Job is in torment about suffering, and with Abraham when he’s doubting that the promises of God are true. And then in Isaiah’s life, there is so much injustice taking place everywhere and he’s preaching and no one’s responding, so God says this to Isaiah: *Why don’t we just go outside for a little bit.* He says, “Look up into the heavens. Who created all these stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each start by name. And because of His great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing.”

Count the stars, Abraham, Job, Isaiah, my brothers, my sisters. And look up in the stars. And God says, *So what was your question?* And you say, *I ... I don’t know. What I do know is that You’re in charge.*

Peter’s appeal here is that you are not alone in your persecution. You are not forgotten in your suffering. In fact, the Creator, God, Yahweh, is ruling from His throne room and this is part of the plan. So what? So, entrust your very souls to this faithful Creator. Entrust your past, whatever that might mean and whatever has been done; entrust your present; and then entrust your future. He means you should trust that faithful Creator with your failures in life. He means giving Him your successes. That’s not your fault so much either. Trusting your very soul means taking all your thoughts captive. It means letting your emotions being determined by what is true in the Bible. It means making choices of the will based on the faithful Creator that has brought all this together. “Entrust” means “and leave all the results to Him.” The end doesn’t have to be the way we expect. Just leave it to Him and He’s going to work it out. That’s what it means.

Conclusion

So, the context of this whole book itself is that the end is near—seize these days. Seize these days—don't miss this. And so, what does Peter do in light of the urgencies that are in his soul? *Come on! You've only got a couple of more rounds left!* What does he do? He writes the local church. I find it interesting that he doesn't write people; he writes churches. He writes to you and me, he's writing Grace.

He's writing Grace, because he knows this: he knows the church is a connection group. The church is a support group for fellow exiles. We're supposed to be getting together as fellow exiles, saying, *Hey, has anybody here ever been kicked out of their family for following Christ?* Actually, raise some hands. Anybody lost family because of this? Yeah. And you say, *Yeah, me too. Yeah, I'm an exile in that way.*

Anybody falsely accused by people in power or lost a promotion on tenure or something like that because you followed Christ and are glad to wear His name? Anyone? Yeah. Made fun of in classrooms, whatever it might be?

The point is that some people are either battered and humiliated and beaten. Some have lost lives. I just want to remind you—because this is a very beautiful church. And I've got to tell you, we've got very beautiful people that come here. And if you're kind of new to Grace, we just practice good hygiene. That's all. It's an allusion. Most of the people in this auditorium and probably listening at home were pretty beat up. We've got some scars, because we've been living our lives for Christ. And we come together because we're a support group saying, *Yeah, me too. I lost everything.*

The church is a full contact gym. We're gym buddies. And you come in on a gym buddy day, and you say, *Wow. Where'd you get that black eye?*

And you say, *Uh ... Tyrone.*

Did he fake that jab and then get you with that left hook?

Yep.

He did to me too.

Well, how do you not do it?

Great, I want to help share with you how to not be ashamed of the gospel the next time you're put in one of these situations where they're trying to embarrass you that way.

Think of the metaphors. Heaven is the ultimate VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars.) *We're in heaven. We're veterans. We're not fighting any more. That was a former battle. Foreign, because we were exiled. We were in another place. War, you bet. It was a war. Did you guys see combat?*

No, I kind of hid a lot. I didn't really play for keeps.

What? That was your only chance to get in the combat!

Veterans of foreign wars—that's what we look forward to.

And so, Peter is telling the Church all of this. He's saying, *Make the most of this.* And because we're a support group and because we're like a team working together to get better at becoming like Christ in all of life, and because we look for a future where we can't go back in time and wish we would have played heroic games, he says this in chapter 5. This is the switch to chapter 5 where he concludes, *You've got to stay together. You've got to stay united. You've got to wake up about what's going on around you. These are not peace times. This is not a game.*

1 Peter 5: Three Commands, One Declaration of Truth

So, in chapter 5, Peter gives us three commands and then one declaration of truth that we're going to enjoy reading together. This is for us, this last application for the church.

1. Be Humble To Everyone

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.

One, he says to stay humble ... to everyone. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time." Leave the results to Him.

But the application for us is, *You go first. No, you go first. Your preference, not my preference.* It's this constant trying to over-submit to one another so that we can enjoy the unity that is available when we are humble.

2. Delegate Your Anxiety

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

Second, he says that we are to delegate our anxiety. I love this. It's the realization that we live anxiously. He says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." You're in the cage, you're in the fight, you're in the ring, whatever the metaphor is going to be—you get pretty anxious, don't you? *I just lost this job, I lost this promotion, because of my life with Christ. What am I going to do with this?* Here's what he says: "Cast your anxiety on Him." And the word "cast" outside the Bible means "to throw overboard." I love that. It doesn't mean to put it over there and save it for later; no, no—it means abandon ship, throw it overboard, because He cares for you. So, the next time you'll all spun up and weirding out about life, you've got to delegate this to the faithful Creator. I bet He can handle this.

3. Stay Alert and Sober, Again!

1 Peter 5:8a

Be alert and of sober mind.

And the next thing he says is to stay alert and stay sober, again. "Be alert and of sober mind." Alert and of sober mind—the third time he has said this phrase in a book about persecution. The first time he said, *Stay alert and sober about your position in Christ*—about the fullness of your salvation. That's the slab you're going to build everything else on. So, stay alert and sober of mind about that.

And then later on in chapter 4 he's going to say, *Stay alert and sober about all the things that are going around the church trying to tear you guys apart.* So, he says, *Make sure that you are deeply loving one another.*

And now I think he's climaxing. This is in more of a panic—it's like he's screaming at us, *Stay alert! Be sober of mind! Because we're almost finished. And the enemy want to eat you.* No, I don't think you can be more graphic. No, that's pretty graphic.

1 Peter 5:8b-9

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.

Look at verses 8 and 9: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”—tear to shreds. “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.”

In our culture right now, in our country, I believe, there is a satanic and demonic plan to divide the things that Jesus Christ, God the Father, the triune God, loves. He loves it being unified, and it's the family and it's the church. And we are not alert and we are not sober. We are suckers. All the devil has to do is just change what some words really mean, and then we slanderously throw these words onto each other as though not much damage is done. And it's destroying churches and it's destroying families.

I was thinking of the song “American Pie.” *I saw Satan laughing with delight ...*
... the day the church has died. And here's why he's laughing. He's saying, *That's all I had to do? That's it? Just whisper in the ears of a few people involved and influential? Give influencers these hate words and let them use the media and the news and the social media?*

And let decades of love and trust be destroyed because you used a hyperbolic accusation against someone that has given you everything. That's it. That's all it takes for America to divide.

Meanwhile in Haiti they're kidnapping and burning churches and they're staying unified. Peter is appealing to us: *Here are believers all around the world that are undergoing this kind of suffering. So, can you guys just wise up a little bit, sober up a little bit, be committed to the things that you're supposed to be wise and sober about--the assurance of your salvation and who you are, committed to loving each other, and now understanding that we're not alone in this war?*

1 Peter 5:10-11

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 now concludes. This is the end of the book, and this is the bedrock truth on how we're to live. Let's read it out loud together, verse 10 and 11: "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 forever and ever." And everybody said ... "Amen." Amen. That's how Peter ends.

I'd like to close with a word of prayer and bless our church in Holy Writ. I just found some passages from some other great coaches, Peter and Paul and James, and they're telling us to keep up the good fight. Do not grow weary in doing good. Do not be deceived by the deceiver.

Would you join me in prayer? I'm just going to read Bible verses.

Lord Jesus, "I want to know Christ," Paul says. I want to know You in the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, because that's how I can know Him. That's how He knows me. I want to become like Him even in His death and so, somehow, I can attain the resurrection from the dead. [Philippians 3:10-11]

When I consider the present sufferings, they're not worthy comparing to the glory that's going to be revealed in us later. All of creation is in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. They want us to get better. [Romans 8:18]

The whole creation is groaning with pains like childbirth right up to the present time. Not just we ourselves—at least we have the fruit of the Spirit with us—but that Spirit groans inwardly as we are eagerly awaiting the full adoption of even our bodies. [Romans 8:22]

And in that same way, in our weakness, the Spirit of God will rest upon us. And it says that the Spirit will intercede for God's people according to His will when they don't know how to pray. [Romans 8:26]

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love Him, those who are called to His purpose. We leave the results to Him. [Romans 8:28]

Hey, Grace, consider it a pure joy, my brothers and sisters, when you face various kinds of trials, because you know that the testing of your faith is going to produce perseverance, and that perseverance will finish its work and make you mature and complete, lacking in nothing. [James 1:2]

My beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange is happening. You should rejoice in that insofar as you get to share Christ's suffering, and you can be rejoicing and glad to see His glory revealed. [1 Peter 4:12]

And if you are insulted because of being a follower of Christ, you are blessed. And here's why—because the Spirit of glory and God is going to rest upon you. [1 Peter 4:14]

If anyone suffers as a Christian, don't you be ashamed. That glorifies God. [1 Peter 4:16]

Those who suffer according to God's will entrust their very souls to a faithful Creator while you keep doing good. [1 Peter 4:19]

Here's a word from the Lord, I believe. You cannot know God without Him suffering for you. And you and I cannot know God unless we suffer for Him.

So, Lord, let us enjoy the punches. And let us learn how not to blink, that it is a badge of honor, not of shame. It's not an insult, it's a compliment, that we would be a church of warriors; that we would enter eternity without regret; that we fought the good fight, that we finished the race, and we loved You all the way. Let us be a church like that. In Jesus' name. Amen.