

# Humility in Suffering

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] You guys have all probably been in a situation where you kind of have to react quickly to a disaster that's about to happen. So maybe something's falling over your head and you have a bodily instinct to immediately put your hands up to protect your head.

And those are good, but sometimes our bodily instincts are not good. So for example, when you're falling from a building or you're about to get hit by a car, the human body often tenses up, become rigid.

And that actually makes, if your body's rigid and not relaxed, when you're hit, the impact actually is far more likely to damage your vital organs. So you suffer more as a result.

And in a similar way, our spiritual instincts often lead us astray. They mislead us as well. And especially when it comes to suffering. And Peter has been talking so far throughout these passages that we've been going through in 1 Peter, that Christians should expect to suffer.

And that suffering comes upon us not because God's abandoned us, because we are God's people. Because we belong to Him and not to this world, that it's normal and it's for us to experience suffering and persecution in this life.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] But when we suffer, sometimes our instinct is not good. Because when we are encountering hardship, often we'll try to seize control of it ourselves and take things into our own hands, rather than letting God take control and submitting to Him and what He's trying to do, as this passage tells us to do.

And sometimes we would try to escape the pain and suffering that we're experiencing by numbing ourselves with distractions, no matter what form that could take, instead of being alert and sober-minded and watchful, as this passage teaches us to.

And finally, in suffering, we can often think that we're suffering alone. We have such an exaggerated or aggrandized view of our own suffering that we say, no one else can understand, no one else knows what I'm going through, they can't relate.

So because of that, we isolate ourselves from community. And all of these things are what we might be prone to do because of our sinful condition, but they are not what this passage teaches us to do.

In short, if you look at 1 Peter 5, 5-11, it tells us that we ought to keep the glory of Christ in view, and that would enable us to endure suffering with humility and watchfulness.

[ 2 : 3 6 ] Keeping the glory of Christ in view enables us to endure suffering with humility and watchfulness. And first, I'm going to talk about the humility in suffering, and then I'll talk about watchfulness in battle.

And then third, I'm going to talk about the glory in Christ that finally motivates us to be humble in suffering and watchful in battle. So if you look with me at verse 6 and 7, and keep your Bibles open, follow along with me because I'll be going back and forth throughout.

First, it says, 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.

So He had already told us in just the preceding verse in verse 5, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

And we talked last week in the sermon about how pride is the total anti-God state of mind because it doesn't let God be sovereign.

[ 3 : 37 ] Instead, He wants to be God Himself, the prideful person, and therefore renders God irrelevant and unnecessary. And in contrast, humility is the quintessential Christian virtue, right? Because it encapsulates the idea of faith.

Because we're saying we are at an end of ourselves. We can't save ourselves, but only God can save us. And that's the humility that God calls us to. But unfortunately, when we're facing suffering, our tendency more often is to let pride rear its ugly head rather than humbling ourselves in suffering.

And this is what I mean is that we will often replay the mistakes that we made to get into this situation over and over again in our heads, maybe thinking that perhaps by doing so we can somehow change the situation, make it better.

Or we will go to the other direction and our minds would race with all the possible worst-case scenarios and try to come up with contingency plans and get anxious and worked up and edgy as a result.

And we lose sleep. But you might be asking then, how is that a sign of pride, right? Because that kind of looks like weakness. That looks like that person's helpless, not prideful.

[ 4 : 45 ] But that's where this passage is so insightful. I think it's very counterintuitive, but it teaches us something that's very insightful into the human condition. And namely, what it teaches us is that anxiety is not an admission of weakness when you become anxious.

It's a boasting in your strength when you become anxious. That anxiety is not a sign of humility, but a sign of pride. How so? How is anxiety a sign of pride?

Because in any given moment, the sense of control that we have is an illusion. Because your vital organs can suddenly fail, right? At this very moment, you could get bit by a mosquito that's been infected with the Zika virus, right?

And at this very moment, your loved one can get into a car accident somewhere. At this very moment, or later, as you're going home, you're getting on the subway, a terrorist can detonate a bomb and you could die in the midst of a crowd of people.

In fact, Acts 17, 28 teaches us that in God we live and move and have our being. In other words, everything that we do now, we're walking around breathing and moving and thinking.

[ 5 : 48 ] Everything that we do, we don't have ultimate control over it, right? We are able to do those things because God sustains us and God enables us. We don't have ultimate control over anything that happens in our lives.

And at any given moment, a million things can get out of control, right? So when this is the case, even that idea of losing control is an illusion because we never had control to begin with.

So how can we lose control over a situation, over our lives? And so it's exceedingly prideful than when we think and presume that we have both the ability and the power to control our lives and the situations around us.

And that's why we become anxious, is that we want to take control of things. We want to make sure everything's going okay. And we think that we have the power and the ability to make sure that that happens. That's why it's prideful, he's saying.

And this is why the first exhortation here in verse 6, humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, is modified by the phrase in verse 7, casting all your anxieties on Him.

[ 6 : 48 ] It's only those who have humbled themselves before God and have acknowledged that it is only God who ultimately has control over all things that can really cast all anxieties on Him.

Because if you do not humble yourself like that, then you will be wrecked with anxiety. And sometimes we might mistakenly think that it's people who are pridefully confident in themselves who have things under control.

But it's really, if you look below the surface and when push comes to shove, the most prideful people are really the most insecure people. And when things are not going as they planned or as they wish, that they become more irritable and edgy and sensitive and defensive than people who have humbled themselves before God.

That those people have the rock solid foundation to be stable even when the storms of life come upon them. And then Peter, so Peter tells us to be humble, to humble ourselves, and then he concludes his exhortation by giving us the reason why we ought to humble ourselves and cast all our anxieties on God.

And that's at the end of verse 7. He says, Because He cares for you. If God were just an all-powerful God, a being, then He could do anything that He wanted to do, but He could also just be a really powerful tyrant, right?

[ 8 : 15 ] That revels in messing with our lives and making our lives miserable, right? But that's why it's not enough that God is simply powerful, but that this powerful God also cares for us, right?

As the Bible consistently tells us, this all-powerful, sovereign God is not just powerful, but that He's also good, right? And He loves us and He cares for us. And that's what this passage reminds us of. This mighty God, the God with the mighty hand, He cares for us.

And it's when we get those two things together, the might of God and the care of God, that we can live freely and fearlessly in this life. And to illustrate that, the person that's the most brutally honest in my life is my wife, right?

So when it comes to how the ministry is going, how my sermon was, or how my character, my parenting, or my function and role as a husband, right?

So she could tell me things that no one else would dare tell me, right? And that's because, and she also has my ear more than anybody else.

[ 9 : 21 ] And that's not just because she knows me better than everybody else, which she does, but also, even more importantly, because she loves me more than anybody else, right? Because I know she cares for me, right? And so I'm willing to put up with the harsh criticism and the painful things that we have to deal with because I know she cares for me, right?

In the same way, when we understand that this all-powerful God, almighty God who rules the universe, really cares for us, right? That he's not just strong and powerful, but he cares for us, and that really will relieve the sense of burden and the fear and the anxiety that we have about life and about the things that are happening to us.

So when you feel burdened, overwhelmed with what's happening at work or with the difficult relationship that you have, remember that God cares for you in those situations. Or if a tragedy hits and then you're starting to wonder, how can God let this happen to me?

Remember that God in that moment still cares for you. And as Peter has been telling us, even if you're mocked or unfairly treated for your faith in Christ, you're persecuted, remember that God is not unaware and he's not unconcerned about what is happening.

He cares for you. And so he says, verse 6-7, 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.

[ 10 : 48 ] When suffering and persecution come, and as they will for believers, we have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. That's Peter's first exhortation. And his second exhortation follows in verses 8 and 9.

It says, 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.

There's really three exhortations here. So it's just be sober-minded, be watchful, and then resist the devil. But all of those are really getting at the same idea. And Peter, if you've been here with us throughout this series in 1 Peter, you know that Peter likes to tell us to be sober-minded.

This is, in fact, his third time telling us to be sober-minded. Again, getting back to the idea that a drunken man, someone that is in a spiritual stupor, he's not able to, he's not prepared and he's not ready to respond to the trials that come in life.

You have to be sober-minded and watchful. And the reason that Peter gives is that your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

[ 12 : 04 ] And this is continuing that motif of the sheep and the shepherd that Peter was just using in chapter, earlier in chapter 5, because he told us that the church is the flock of God and then the elders are called to shepherd the people, right?

But when the lion is prowling around the flock, the shepherd and the sheep are not sleeping, right? I mean, they know danger is out there. They're not sleeping.

They're alert. They're vigilant. That's the image here of the church. That's what Christians are called to be watchful, as if we are a flock of sheep and there's a lion prowling around.

And the word that's used here of the devil to describe him, the adversary, it's the language of court and battle. So you could think of it like the devil is prosecuting you, accusing you, trying to get us locked up in jail for something.

Or you could imagine the adversary, him being in battle array, trying to destroy us, in battle against us. This is our adversary, our enemy. And if you pay attention to politics or you listen to the radio or things like that, a lot of the doomsayers today say that the World War III is not far in the horizon.

[ 13 : 15 ] So they will warn us of that. Now that may or may not be true, but this I know is true, and that's that already, presently, we are in a spiritual battle of eternal significance that far outweighs and overshadows any imaginable nuclear World War III.

And that's what the Bible teaches us. It's that Satan is a more potent and pernicious enemy than Nazism, Communism, or even militant Islam.

And yet, and this battle, this war is happening not just in a distant country somewhere that we find out about on TV, but it's happening in our country. It's happening in our city, our neighborhood, and even in our own minds and hearts.

This battle is being waged all around us. And the casualties of this war, it's not just, you know, bodily limbs or earthly lives, but it's eternal perdition in hell.

That's what the casualties of this war are. Yet, so many of us live as if this is not the case. We live as if we're living in the peace times, right?

[ 14 : 21 ] Not war times. And in war, like if you look at history, read in history books or textbooks about World War II, World War I, there's no room for dilly-dallying or, you know, wasting time and money, right?

Because the whole energy of the nation, all the human resources, economic resources are concentrated and expended in order to win this single war because they know that the luxuries and the leisures have their place at another time because if you don't win this war, you're going to have no luxury or no leisure, right?

I mean, it's time for war, right? And so in a similar way, then if we lose this spiritual war, we lose everything, right? If we are lost without Christ, apart from Christ, if the people that God is calling us to reach in mission, if they're lost apart from Christ, they're lost forever.

They're lost in eternal perdition. And as Mark 8.36 says, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Right? Following Christ is not a hobby that we devote just a part of our leisure time to, but it's a life or death warfare because the adversary that of all of us, of all believers, the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

And that's what we're called to resist him firm in our faith. So then we have to ask ourselves, you know, in what ways are we living as group if we're living in the peace times and not in wartime, right?

[ 15 : 44 ] What are the things that we indulge in that intoxicate us or numb us and distract us from the battle at hand, right? And that could be a number of things. It could be things that seem as innocent as, you know, playing, you know, Pokemon Go too much, right?

Or it could be things as seemingly innocent as eating too much, you know, and becoming slothful as a result, gluttony, right? Or it could be something like, you know, binge watching on weekends on Netflix as a way to evacuate, as a way to escape from the burdens and the realities of life, right?

Or it could be something that seems seemingly more serious like addiction to pornography or drugs or alcohol.

All of these things from seemingly trivial to the serious, they can all distract us and take us away from this wartime mindset so that we are not sober-minded, so that we're not watchful.

And I'm not, I don't know, I don't say this as a way to condemn you as a church. This is something that I battle with every day as well, right? And I repent of it on a regular basis, you know, I don't know how many times, you know, I lie in bed and then I think of what if I spent those times that I did this and this or I was surfing too much online, what if I pray during that time for the brother that's struggling with a certain sin, maybe then that brother would see more victory in his life, right?

[ 17 : 16 ] Maybe this, the people that are struggling or suffering around us and if those people that maybe I could have been reaching out to those people, if I could have been reading this book instead of doing this, then maybe my sermon could be more compelling and powerful and that people could and it could really serve people, right?

Those are all things that I struggle with as well. but it's something, but God's calling us as our church to be sober-minded and watchful because this is a serious business.

We're in a wartime and in this, the culture that Peter is writing in especially, Christians can be persecuted for a number of things but because they possess, they claim exclusive allegiance to God, in a polytheistic culture.

They were at the risk of losing their status in their family but also in their society at large and of losing their livelihood and potentially their life and to these people, Peter is telling them, when you're suffering this way, when you're suffering be mindful, be sober-minded, be watchful, stay firm in your faith knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by our brotherhood throughout the world, right?

And that's again a huge source of comfort as well because if you have gone through suffering, if you've gone through a particular tragedy in your life, you know that it could be an isolating experience because when you're suffering you feel like other people just don't understand because they haven't gone through that or they just don't know what's going on but this is hugely comforting because he's telling us, no, we're not alone when we suffer as believers.

[18:52] We're not alone when we undergo suffering for being Christians because Christians all throughout the world he's saying is undergoing the same kind of suffering and this is the reason why when you're getting counsel from someone and someone who has gone through the same experience comes alongside to help you and to pray with you it matters a lot more it's more impactful it's because you know that that person understands that person knows and so in a similar way this could be a tremendous comfort for us knowing that we're not alone in this but the church throughout the world is experiencing this kind of suffering.

So Peter exhorts us to endure suffering with humility and watchfulness humility and suffering and watchfulness in battle and Peter finally offers us the motivation for this fight how we can persevere in this way and he says in verses 10 to 11 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 it's the glory in Christ that Peter is ultimately pointing us to because if you if we admit you know people never voluntarily subject themselves to suffering right they have to have a reason for it so the Olympics have been going on so if you look at those athletes you know they did not you know subject their body to so much pain and daily rigor and discipline over the last four years or eight years for some people just for the sake of doing it right just because they like the pain or discipline no they're not doing that they did that they subjected themselves to that suffering that pain and rigor with the goal in mind knowing that they're going to win the gold medal that they're going to break the world record that they're going to be remembered for what they did right so they strove that goal in the same way

Christians we don't suffer in vain we don't suffer for the sake of suffering saying oh no this is just we're just going to suffer because we like suffering suffering is good in and of itself no rather we suffer knowing that that points to our future glory knowing that our alienation in this world is a sign of our reconciliation with God it's because we are with God and belong to Him that we don't belong in this world the fact that when we're rejected by this world that's a sign that we're accepted by God right that we're His elect that He elected us He chose us that's why we're able to suffer and endure because of the glory that we foresee that is coming in Christ and the word glory Peter uses it throughout his epistles to refer to what Christ has accomplished and what awaits us in the future life to come when Christ comes to judge the world and to redeem all creation and you hear an echo of this even earlier in verse 6 it says humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God now that's not simply referring to the fact that God is mighty but the mighty hand of God is a phrase that occurs repeatedly in the context of the Exodus right so if you look read throughout Exodus it will say by the mighty hand of God

God delivered Israel from Egypt mighty hand of God God led Israel through the wilderness right and so the mighty hand of God is a phrase that hearkens back to people to Israel's history of redemption the fact that God one time redeemed you from slavery and if you look at the New Testament New Testament takes that metaphor and then applies it to Christ and describes the redemption that Christ accomplished as a second Exodus right so the first Exodus God sent Moses to deliver his people from slavery Egypt in the second Exodus God sends his own son Jesus Christ to deliver his people from slavery to sin right and Christ pays the ransom price for sin he dies lays on his own life so that we might be saved so that we can partake and bask in this eternal glory that belongs to Christ that Christ won for us and it's that glory in Christ that enables us to be humble in suffering and watchful in battle right because we know because of what Christ has done that we will be vindicated just as Christ suffered and now he's in glory we too we suffer now we'll be vindicated and we'll be delivered as it says the God of all grace says has called us to his eternal glory in Christ and he will himself restore confirm strengthen and establish us so those all those four words it's kind of like a crescendo of assurance that God will one day make all things right he's going to restore confirm strengthen and establish us as a household of God right and and compared to this eternal glory that we anticipate the suffering that we experience is going to be only for a little while it says right the suffering seems interminable sometimes but it says it's just for a little while and compared to the eternal glory that we're going to experience if you have please don't mind my daughter it's the second time this has happened that if you have not yet made up your mind about whether or not to follow Christ these promises obviously are not for you that God will himself restore confirm strengthen and establish because those promises are for those whom he has called to his eternal glory in Christ so if you have not repented of sin and if you have not trusted in Christ for salvation then we invite you to do that today right don't forfeit the eternal glory that you have that you could have in Christ for the temporal glory of this world don't ignore the spiritual warfare that's going on all around you simply because you don't see the devil right it's kind of like if you look at the modern modern warfare the warfare is not waged any longer it's simply in the brick and mortar spaces but it's in cyberspace now right in the same way the fact that we don't see it doesn't mean that it's not happening right spiritual battle is waging all around us and it's even more insidious because we don't see it don't ignore it you will ignore it at your own peril but if you are a Christian then I want to join you to remember the glory that is in Christ that is yours in Christ that is ours in Christ because that's what's going to ultimately enable us to persevere through the suffering and to be watchful to remain watchful in battle and that we are children of God cared for and guided by the mighty hand of God that we are the soldiers of God that are supposed to be part of this battle and to battle against the adversary who is out to get us and I love how this passage closes this is really the main the end of the body before he goes into the greeting and to conclude his letter it says to him to God be the dominion forever and ever amen because

Peter's writing in the Roman Empire and Christians are facing persecution and soon you know statewide persecution under Nero and in this climate it would surely have seemed to all the believers that dominion belongs to the Rome dominion belongs to the emperor not to themselves not to God but yet in this context Peter writes to God be the dominion forever and ever amen and he concludes this letter and then we see 2,000 years later the Roman Empire is just the page in the history books now but the church has endured God's people has endured and the kingdom of God continues to advance dominion does belong to God and God alone so then when it seems to us that power glory and dominion is not ours but it belongs to the world when it seems that way say it along with Peter and the believers who have been saying this over the centuries to God be the dominion forever and ever amen and it will be so in eternity with that let's respond in prayer