

Hope When Life is Hard...



A VERSE BY VERSE
EXPOSITION OF
THE EPISTLE OF
FIRST PETER

After the Storm

1 Peter 5:10-11 (710)

Scripture assumes an end to temporal suffering. The Catechism speaks of man's fall into "an estate of sin and misery" (SC Q. 17). One day the pain and loss, the hardship and heartache that attends our fallen condition will be over (Rev. 22:1-5). The man who dies in his sin will be condemned to a second, eternal, state infinitely worse than the temporal misery he knew in this life. But the redeemed sinner, the man who dies in Christ, will be ushered into everlasting blessedness (I Pet. 1:4, 3:9). Indeed, **the grace of God will triumph over any and all grief.** This morning we get a glimpse into the glorious goal of our election; the ultimate purpose for which God has called us into *fellowship with His Son* (I John 1:3).

1 Peter 5:10-11 *And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹ To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Four hurricanes devastated the State of Florida this year. From the satellite imagery of the Atlantic Ocean you could see these monsters lined up one after the other and you knew it was only a matter of time before they hit. Hurricane Charley made landfall on August 13. Thirty-three people died. Estimated

damages in Florida approached \$7.5 billion. Hurricane Frances made landfall on September 5. Thirty-eight people perished. Estimated damages in Florida approached \$4.5 billion. Hurricane Ivan made landfall on September 16 at Gulf Shores, Alabama. Twenty-nine Floridians died. Damage estimates in Florida reached \$4.1 billion. Hurricane Jeanne made landfall on September 25. Seventeen people died. Estimated damages reached \$4 billion. With one hundred and seventeen people dead and \$20.1 billion dollars in damages I think it's fair to say that the State of Florida was ravaged.

As bad as those seven weeks were the terror, the inconvenience, and the destruction eventually came to an end. The winds died down. The rain ceased to fall. The clouds disappeared and the sun came out. Even the clean up and rebuilding will one day be done.

So too the storms that ravage our own lives. Whether we experience one or several in succession they eventually pass: if not in this life certainly in the life to come. Peter has taught us about the storm of hardship and suffering. Now in these two verses he turns his attention to the aftermath. The Spirit of God has designed these two verses for the consolation of struggling saints. His point is that **grace will triumph over any and all grief**.

Verse 10. *And after you have suffered for a little while.* For a little while suggests two things. First, and most obvious, that suffering has an end in terms of time. Certainly, many of life's storms are over in days, weeks, months, or years. When all is said and done they have lasted but *a little while* in comparison to an entire lifetime. A *little while* is better understood, however, not in comparison to a lifetime of 70 years or more but in comparison to eternity. This seems to be the

general position of the Bible. **James 4:14**, *you are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away*. From time to time throughout our lives we shall know the heaviness of trials. Even if we are burdened with hardship for years on end it is still *a little while* in comparison to the eternal joy that awaits us. This is exactly Paul's point in **2 Corinthians 4:17**, *for momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison*.

But suffering also has an end in the sense of purpose. God is using every experience, especially perhaps the more unpleasant ones, to further his loving purpose in our lives and to enable us to grow in grace and in our knowledge of Him (**2 Peter 3:18**) (see Hillyer, p. 148). Storms pass when God's sanctifying purposes for them are accomplished. We ask, "When will the hardship end?" It will end when God has accomplished in you all that the trial was designed to accomplish.

This verse oozes sovereignty. We have learned that our sufferings and struggles are *according to the will of God* (**2:15; 3:17; 4:2, 6, 19; 5:2**). *For a little while* suggests that there is Someone governing the various aspects of our suffering. Indeed, we have learned that the living God ordains and governs our suffering. Such governance is a function of His providence. The Catechism asks, What are God's works of providence? God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions (**SC Q. 11**).

It is God who ordains and governs the kind of hardship you shall know. Is your struggle to be physical, mental, financial, relational? Will you know persecution?

Will you know material loss? Will tragedy or disaster strike? These matters are in the hands of God and we are content to leave them there.

It is God who ordains and governs the intensity of your hardship. He establishes the degree of difficulty. In Olympic diving there is a numerical degree of difficulty attached to each kind of dive that is factored in to determine a competitor's score. For example a backward 3 ½ somersault in a pike position has a much higher degree of difficulty than a regular old back dive. How hard will your road prove to be? How painful? How disrupting? These matters are in the hands of God and we are content to leave them there.

It is God who ordains and governs the duration of the hardship. Will the trial be momentary? Will it be occasional? Will it last for weeks, months, or years? Shall you bear the load the rest of your days? These matters are in the hands of God and we are content to leave them there (refer to the hymn *What e're My God Ordains Is Right*). We confess with the Apostle Paul, *for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18)*. In any event, **grace will triumph over any and all grief.**

Indeed, sovereign governance is exercised by *the God of all grace*. We have come to one of God's great names. In **2 Corinthians 1:3** God is called *the God of all comfort*. In **1 Thessalonians 5:23** and **Hebrews 13:20**, *the God of peace*. God's grace is unlimited in terms of both its quality and its quantity. Paul tells us in **II Corinthians 9:8**, *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed*. The writer of Hebrews invites us to *draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that*

we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (4:16). James assures that God *gives more grace (4:6).* As the God of all grace our heavenly Father is sufficient for every type of situation. God's grace is comprehensive and universal – sufficient for any need of any believer at any time in any place.

Not only is our heavenly Father *the God of all grace* but He is also the God *who called you to His eternal glory in Christ.* God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. God called the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt. God called Israel to be His people. **1 Peter 1:15** speaks of *the Holy One who called you.* **1 Peter 2:9** speaks of *Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* **1 Peter 2:21** explains that *you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.* **1 Peter 3:9** says *you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.*

God calls elect sinners to Himself. J. I. Packer explains, “This is the effectual or internal calling of classical Reformed theology, the first act in the *ordo salutis* (Latin for “order of salvation”) whereby the benefits of redemption are conveyed to those for whom they were intended” (*EDoT*, p. 184). Calling is the doctrine that seeks to describe God's “summoning men by his word, and laying hold of them by his power, to play a part in and enjoy the benefits of his gracious redemptive purposes” (Packer). These benefits include regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. Glory is our destiny by calling. Glory is God's eternal intention for us. My friend, God will accomplish all to which you were called in Jesus Christ. The point is that temporal persecution and suffering can in no wise thwart the eternal purposes of God in calling His people. Surely, **grace will triumph over any and all grief.**

Indeed, God *Himself* shall see to it. *Himself* is the English translation of the Greek intensive pronoun (*autos*). The Holy Spirit is emphasizing that it is God personally who delivers His children from our trials and suffering. Once again Peter desires to console us by assuring us of the reliability of divine deliverance. In the end, deliverance is God's work, not the Christians', and so is sure. When the Bible says *God Himself* it reminds us that our confidence is grounded not in our own strength or loyalty but in God's strength and faithfulness (see Achtemeier, p. 345).

There is an air of tender condescension in the words *will Himself*. They remind me of God's words in Ezekiel 34. **Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16, 23-24** ¹¹ *For thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out ...* ¹⁵ *"I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God.* ¹⁶ *"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick ...* ²³ *"Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.* ²⁴ *"And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.*

This Shepherd, this Servant of whom Ezekiel speaks is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. In Him God's grace, condescension, consolation, and strengthening ministry come together. Listen to **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17** *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*

What does God's ministry to us after the storm look like? Peter says that God will *perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you*. These four verbs describe the

actions God will take on behalf of suffering and hard-pressed Christians. I want to say three things about these four verbs. **First**, they describe what God says He will do and, therefore, are to be understood as promises. In other words, you can take verse 10 to the bank. **Second**, this process of perfecting, confirming, strengthening, and establishing us in faith is already underway. That's right. God promises to perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you ultimately and completely when Christ appears (**1:5, 7, 13; 4:13; 5:4**). But the process is already underway. God is accomplishing these things even today through our ministry to one other in the body of Christ. God is accomplishing these things through our attendance upon the means of grace – the Word, the Sacraments, and prayer. God is accomplishing these things through our careful obedience to Him. **Third**, these four verbs emphasize a single point. “These four [powerful] verbs are roughly synonyms” (Michaels, p. 303). What Peter has done is pile up [four] closely related terms that together underscore the good that God intends for us and even now is producing in our suffering (see Davids, p. 196). Let's look at the four verbs themselves.

The first of the four verbs [*katartizein*] is translated *perfect* in the NASV and *restore* in the NIV. I prefer restore. The word is used in **Galatians 6:1**: *Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.* Maybe its use in **Mark 1:19** will help us better understand it. *And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.* Some have suggested it means *to set right* as a physician might set a broken bone. One commentator observes, “It is possible that [this first verb] is preliminary to the others in implying restoration, or setting right of unhappy circumstances” (Michaels, p. 303). Beloved, God has promised to restore your

joy and delight in Him, to mend every broken heart, and to remove all fear and doubt.

The second verb [*sterixei*] is translated *confirm*. It means *to support*. God has promised to fill us with that courage and strength which, on account of our weakness and frailty, sometimes seem to evaporate in the midst of trial and hardship.

The third verb [*sthenosei*] is translated *strengthen*. “This is the sole occurrence of [this particular form] in Biblical or secular Greek. It is probably best not to speculate but to say simply that God has promised to make us *firm* in our faith; unwavering in our trust in Him (see **verse 9**).

The last verb [*themeliosei*] means to *establish*. The word recalls the saying of Jesus in **Matthew 7:25**, “*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been **founded** upon the rock.*” Beloved, you shall be like a well-built house in Florida that is able, by God’s grace, to withstand every hurricane that slams into it. The cumulative effect of these four synonyms is to assure us that **grace will triumph over any and all grief**.

The work on Hoover Dam began in 1931. It was completed in 1935. It was built in an arch, slightly curved against the water. This causes the dam to be pushed into the rock walls by the pressure of the water that it holds back. The bottom of the dam is 660 feet thick and rises 726 feet to the top where it is only 45 feet thick. It stretches over 1200 feet from side to side. The dam was constructed of five - foot thick layers of concrete one on top of the other - 6.6 billion tons of concrete

altogether. Get this. It has been nearly 70 years since the dam was established but the concrete is still getting harder. It is estimated that the concrete will take some 1500 years to completely cure. God has established us. Even now He continues to strengthen us. And when Christ appears He will complete His work in us.

Dr. Clowney says, “[In these verses] the thought of God’s completing his work in believers is probably foremost. We are not to suppose that these [four]actions of God will take place only after the time of suffering is over. Rather, God’s gracious work of completing and perfecting us begins now, during the brief time of our suffering. Indeed, God uses suffering to perfect us as he leads us to the time when he will complete our transformation in the glory of Christ.”

Verse 11. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen. Howard Marshall says, “It is appropriate to express a doxology in praise of God at the thought of his gracious promise to his people. In this doxology Peter ascribes power to God. This is entirely appropriate in the context. If verse 10 has indicated what God will powerfully do for his people, it is appropriate to celebrate in a doxology the fact of this power. The intention is to say: to God belongs all or ultimate power, so that the promise in verse 10 itself rests on the Christian belief that God is not only gracious but also omnipotent. He will ultimately triumph over evil” (Marshall, p. 173).

Peter has just summarized God’s plans for us. The One who has planned and promised is also the One to whom belongs the power to fulfill. This is indeed assurance for us, His people. **Grace will triumph over any and all grief.** To

such assurance we with Peter can only respond with the liturgical *Amen*, so be it
(Davids, pp. 196-197).

Hope When Life is Hard...



A VERSE BY VERSE
EXPOSITION OF
THE EPISTLE OF
FIRST PETER

After the Storm

1 Peter 5:10-11 (710)

Big Idea: the grace of God will triumph over any and all grief.

1 Peter 5:10-11 *And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹ To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Four hurricanes

The Spirit of God has designed these two verses for the _____
of struggling saints.

And after you have suffered for a little while.

For a little while suggests two things:

(1) Suffering has an end in terms of _____.

(2) Suffering also has an end in the sense of _____.

Storms pass when God's _____ purposes for them are accomplished.

We have learned that the living God _____ and _____ our suffering.

Such governance is a function of His _____ (SC Q. 11).

It is God who ordains and governs the _____ of hardship you shall know.

It is God who ordains and governs the _____ of your hardship.

It is God who ordains and governs the _____ of the hardship.

the God of all grace

God's grace is comprehensive and universal – sufficient for any _____ of
any _____ at any time in any _____.

who called you to His eternal glory in Christ

“This is the effectual or internal calling of classical Reformed theology, the first act in the *ordo salutis* (Latin for “order of salvation”) whereby the benefits of redemption are conveyed to those for whom they were intended” (J. I. Packer).

These benefits include regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification and **glorification**.

Glory is our _____ by calling.
Glory is God’s eternal _____ for us.

will Himself

The Holy Spirit is emphasizing that it is God _____ who delivers His children from our trials and suffering. **See Ezekiel 34:11, 15-16, 23-24**

perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you

About these four verbs ...

They describe what God says He will do and, therefore, are to be understood as _____.

This _____ of perfecting, confirming, strengthening, and establishing us in faith is already underway.

These four verbs emphasize a single _____ ... the _____ that God intends for us and even now is producing in our suffering.

The four verbs

[*katartizein*] ... restore

[*sterixei*] ... confirm

[*sthenosei*] ... strengthen

[*themeliosei*] ... establish

To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“The intention is to say: to God belongs all or ultimate power, so that the promise in verse 10 itself rests on the Christian belief that God is not only gracious but also _____. He will ultimately triumph over evil” (Howard Marshall).