

6 | The Culmination of Our Hope



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

C.S. Lewis lived through both World Wars and understood all too well the tumult and grief of that season of world history. Many were suffering greatly across his homeland of Great Britain and throughout Europe and the Pacific. Additionally, Lewis mourned the death of his wife, Joy, who passed away after an illness during their brief marriage. Yet, the sufferings and setbacks that dotted Lewis's life only seemed to fuel his writings. In one of his greatest accomplishments, *Mere Christianity*, for example, Lewis wrote: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. ... I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death."⁸

Because Christians have been given eternal life in the coming kingdom of God, we have hope. The trials of this life will one day give way to a life of eternal joy and peace.

GROUP TIME

THE POINT: What we hope for in _____ will one day be fully _____.

In chapter 5, Peter concluded his letter with some practical wisdom and instruction for those facing persecution. However, his teaching may not be what his readers expected from him. When we think about standing strong against any kind of opposition, most of us would probably seek to be bold and courageous. However, Peter encouraged his “dear friends” (1 Peter 4:12) to face their trials with humility.

1 Peter 5:5b-7 ^{5b} **All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.** ⁶ **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time,** ⁷ **casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.**

When we _____ ourselves, God exalts us.

Humility creates an atmosphere of intimacy with God. No human can strut before the Savior. Humility is directly related to our submission to God and His authority. As we submit under His mighty hand, we recognize His sovereign control over our lives, His grace and provision in our suffering, and the sacrifice of His only Son to give us a living hope. Humility acknowledges that none of those gifts could have come from our own hand; rather, they are a gift of grace from a powerful, loving Father who cares deeply for us. In this position of humble surrender to God, we yield all our cares and anxieties to Him. We humbly acknowledge we can do nothing about those things that burden us, but the One who cares for us can.

GOD'S STRENGTH > OUR STRENGTH

What are some specific ways Christians can “cast” their cares upon God? Circle the disciplines that help you let go of burdens and cares, and surrender them to God.

Prayer	Worship	Spiritual conversations	Reading the Bible
Silence	Fasting	Serving others	Fellowship
Journaling	Other: _____		

1 Peter 5:8-9 ⁸ Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.

When we resist Satan, we can _____ in the midst of suffering.

Even as we humble ourselves before God, we should also be ready and watchful. We should not grow lax or underestimate the fierceness of the enemy. Peter described the devil with the vivid image of one who is strong, loud, and relentless. Certainly, these verses weren't intended to scare us but to wake us up. The battle is raging, the enemy is real, the days are evil, and the time is short! We can't afford to take a nap while Satan is on the prowl. The devil is strong, but our faith is the foundation for our resistance. We don't resist through sheer determination or effort. We resist the devil in the firm assurance of our belief that he is a defeated foe and we serve a conquering King.

1 Peter 5:10-11 ¹⁰ The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹ To him be dominion forever. Amen.

God will ultimately _____ to His eternal glory.

Peter magnified the brilliance of God from whom every single grace is given. The things we've been given—the hope, calling, provision, strength, restoration, joy, endurance, and reward—all flow from God's grace.

- ▶ **Restore.** God is able to perfect us and mend anything that may need repair. This conveys the idea of mending a net or restoring a bone to its right place when out of joint. God Himself will set us right so that nothing is lacking as He shapes us into the image of His Son.
- ▶ **Establish.** This word means to ground someone, and it carries the idea of having a firm footing. Once He has restored us, God gives us a firm foundation under our feet.
- ▶ **Strengthen.** The root word *strength* is reminiscent of God's promise to Israel: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).
- ▶ **Support.** God has laid the foundation of our lives with Jesus Himself as our Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6-7). Jesus used this same word when He described the wise man building his house on the solid rock foundation, thus enabling it to withstand the rains, rising water, and winds (Matthew 7:24-25).

DAY 1: Choose to follow Jesus' example of humility.

Read 1 Peter 5:5b.

Peter instructed his readers to practice humility in verse 5, and he employed a most unique word that we translate into English as “clothe” (v. 5). “All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” (v. 5). It’s the only time we see this particular word used in the New Testament, and it describes the apron worn by slaves. Slaves wore this apron over their outer garments, and it distinguished them from those who were free. Peter was commissioning believers to take up humility like the garment of a slave.

Peter surely must have had that in mind the moment Jesus tied a slave’s apron around His waist, took a basin of water, and washed His disciples’ feet. The apostle also likely recalled his own stunned reaction when Jesus clothed Himself and did the work of the lowest servant. Perhaps even offended that the Son of God would take such a degrading, humble posture, Peter had protested. To conclude the washing of His disciples’ feet, Jesus instructed them: “Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:12b-14). Peter learned to follow this example, and now he was calling others to do the same: “Clothe yourselves with humility” (1 Peter 5:5).

As you go about your day, pay attention to the various things you put on to wear. Whether it’s a jacket, sunglasses, or clothing, let it be a reminder that we can choose to put on humility, too.

“All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1 PETER 5:5B

DAY 2: Trust God to handle whatever difficulties you face.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

Peter urged his readers to cast all their cares on God. In a literal sense casting means to throw something on to something else, as when Jesus' disciples threw their clothes on the colt on which He rode into Jerusalem (Luke 19:35). In a figurative sense it means to give control of (responsibility for) something to someone else; for example, entrusting your money to a banker. The word for the first occurrence of "cares" can also be translated as "worries" or "anxieties." Peter urged believers to demonstrate their humility and their confidence in God's sovereign plan for them, including His allowing them to suffer for Christ's sake. One clear way to demonstrate their humility was to give God all their worries and fears and to trust that His grace would be enough to enable them to endure their circumstances (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Peter gave them the best possible reason to take this step: "because he cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7; see Psalm 55:22). God was concerned about the welfare of these Christians. Worry isn't only evidence of a refusal to believe in God's power; worry is a sign that we don't trust His love. Whatever happened, they could be certain about God's love for them.

Pride can hold us back from casting all our cares on God. Spend time in prayer, honestly and humbly sharing your worries, fears, and struggles with Him.

DAY 3: We do not stand alone when we persevere in the midst of suffering.

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9.

It's interesting that Peter brought attention to the similar suffering of believers around the world even as he sought to bolster the courage and resolve of his readers. How could they resist the devil and stand firm? They could fight in the understanding that they're not alone and that fellow believers were experiencing—and resisting—the same temptations and sufferings all over the world.

The same is true for us today. When faced with persecution or trials or difficult days, we need to be reminded that we aren't alone; other members of the body of Christ are experiencing even more severe sufferings around the world. Our hardships likely pale in comparison when we read or hear the stories of those who risk beatings, torture, imprisonment, kidnapping, family separation, and even death for the sake of following Christ.

Visit www.imb.org/pray for daily and monthly prayer suggestions for the global church. Choose one request and pray for it today.

DAY 4: Pray for those who are persecuted for the faith.

Read Hebrews 13:3.

Do an Internet search on the persecuted church, and you'll quickly be brought to a sobering realization of what believers in other parts of the world face on a daily basis. Every month, on average 345 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons; 105 churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked; and 219 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned.⁹

As we become aware of the persecuted church around the world, let's turn that knowledge into prayer. Anthony Steele has written a helpful guide for praying for our persecuted brothers and sisters:

- ▶ Pray for the wisdom of the persecuted church in the preaching of the gospel.
- ▶ Pray for boldness for Christians who are persecuted for their faith.
- ▶ Pray for secret house churches that are meeting daily throughout the world.
- ▶ Pray for Christian brothers and sisters who are imprisoned for the sake of the gospel.
- ▶ Pray for the power of the gospel to transform oppressive nations throughout the world.¹⁰

Use the prayer needs listed above to intercede for Christians across the globe facing serious persecution.



DAY 5: Recognize that our current trials are temporary.

Read 1 Peter 5:10-11.

I love the stunning beauty with which Peter closed his letter, as he ushered us to the bigger picture. We may “have suffered a little while” (v. 10), but it’s as if he gently placed his hand under our chins and lifted our gaze from the temporary to the eternal. We’ve been called to eternal glory in Christ. And for that we can shout with Paul, “Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Three words shine like bright beams of light in any darkness and difficulty: “a little while” (v. 10). With a view to eternity, any suffering we experience is short and has an end. It won’t last forever, and it won’t overshadow the whole of our lives with Christ. May we testify with Job of the great hope of God through Christ our Savior: “Yet he knows the way I have taken; when he has tested me, I will emerge as pure gold. My feet have followed in his tracks; I have kept to his way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commands from his lips; I have treasured the words from his mouth more than my daily food” (Job 23:10-12).

Memorize 1 Peter 5:10-11. Ask God to bring this truth to your mind when hope seems impossible. Trust Him to do all that He has promised He will do for you.

“With a view to eternity, any suffering we experience is short and has an end.”

DR. MICHAEL CATT