

# For every true Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to turn this morning to our reading now in 1 Peter chapter 5, and that's page 1016 if you have one of our church Bibles.

And we come to the last of our studies in this fortifying letter that we've been studying together over a period of time.

We're going to look really at what is the close of the main part of the letter, verse 6 to 11 of chapter 5 before the closing remarks. We dealt with those remarks, remember, way back at the beginning as we looked at the letter as a whole.

But I'm going to read from chapter 5, verse 1, right through to the end so we get the sense of the flow. So I exhort elders among you as a fellow elder and a fellow witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not domineering those in your charge but being examples to the flock.

[ 1 : 19 ] And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to elders.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another. For God opposes the pride but gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves or be humble, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced or being accomplished, being brought to completion in your brotherhood throughout the world.

[ 2 : 22 ] And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you in Christ to his eternal glory, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion, the power, forever and ever. Amen. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother, as I regard him, I've written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.

Stand firm in it. She who's at Babylon, who's likewise chosen, elect, sends you greetings. And so does Mark, my son.

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Amen.

May God bless us his word. Well, do turn, if you would, to 1 Peter chapter 5 and this last section all about the road to glory for every true church.

[ 3 : 38 ] As I said, we come to our final study in the paragraphs that end this letter to a hard-pressed church, to a struggling group of Christians in a world that was evidently hostile to Christian faith.

And by now, I hope that we are familiar with the repeat refrain of the letter that whoever follows Jesus belongs to an Easter people.

Hallelujah is indeed our song of triumph. But throughout this life, Peter teaches us that there will always be a minor note to that Hallelujah chorus.

Because we've not yet reached the great climax of our salvation, the finale that awaits the return of Jesus Christ at the last time, as he says in chapter 1, verse 5.

So our song is a song of joy inexpressible, Peter tells us, because we are an elect people. We're chosen by God. We're his.

[ 4 : 47 ] We're called. It's a great word in Peter. We're called out of darkness into his marvelous light. And that sense of calling envelops the whole letter.

It's in the very first verse of chapter 1. And it's almost in the very last verse here in chapter 5, verse 10. We're called in Christ to eternal glory, he says.

And yet, within that great truth, there is held another all-too-evident reality. And that is that in the meantime, until that last day, we are exiles, says Peter, strangers in a hostile world, a world that is opposed to Christ, a world full of slander, of scorn, and often of real sufferings for Jesus' sake.

But what Peter has taught us is that these sufferings are not accidental. They're not just purposeless. No, the deepest truth of all is that these sufferings are the road to glory that we are called to.

And that these sufferings do something to us. They're necessary for us. Because they're the means by which God is preparing us for that eternal glory.

[ 6 : 07 ] That's his extraordinary message. Remember back in chapter 1, verses 6 and 7, Peter says that our faith is being tested by fire so that it comes forth as gold.

Even if for a little while, he says, it's necessary that we suffer so that we will share in the praise and glory that comes at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It's necessary. And you'll see in chapter 5, verse 10, Peter says the same again. We're called, he says, to suffer for a little while so that we'll share in the glory, so that we'll be restored and strengthened and confirmed and established in that eternal glory.

So that's the road to glory. But why? Why is it that kind of road? Well, because remember, chapter 2, verse 21.

Our calling, says Peter, is to share in the exact pattern of the Lord Jesus himself. He died for us, says Peter, so that we might be healed and so that we might live with him to righteousness forever.

[ 7 : 19 ] But that happens, says Peter, as we follow in his pattern. It happens as we walk with him to glory on his road. Do you remember? Whoever would be my disciple must take up his cross daily and follow me, said Jesus.

That's the only road to glory for every true Christian believer. We saw that in chapter 4, verse 12 to 19. You share Christ's sufferings, verse 13 of chapter 4, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

It's true for every Christian leader. Chapter 5, verse 1. They'll be, like Peter, a fellow witness to the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

And so it is, says Peter here, for every church the world over, verse 9, the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

And so this last paragraph, verses 6 to 11 of chapter 5, before the closing remarks, it really sums up the whole message of the letter, as if to drive it home.

[ 8 : 27 ] I had a lecture at university in pharmacology, and he began every lecture the same way, with these words. Tell him what you're going to tell him, tell him, and tell him what you've told him.

And he proceeded to do exactly that. And that's what Peter's doing here. He's telling us, again, at the very end of his letter, what he's already told us. So what are the marks of a church that is securely and solidly on the road to glory, in the midst of a hostile world, an alien world?

A church that will not be slipping back and sinking into sin. Well, it will be, says Peter in this paragraph, a church that is adorned with humility, a church that is armed with sobriety, and a church that is truly anchored in eternity.

Look first at verses 5 to 7, because he urges us here to be a church adorned with humility. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility.

In other words, be a humbled people, knowing that ours is the pattern of an Easter people, sharing in the sufferings of Christ, and so being shaped through suffering for glory with him and like him.

[ 9 : 48 ] And therefore, knowing the comfort that this present humbling brings us. Because God, says Peter, gives grace to the humble now, and glory in due time.

And all the way along the way, he assures us that he cares for us. He cares for you. Now that central command, be humble, is very plain in these two verses.

You get the word humble, or humility, quickly in succession, three times. Clothe yourselves with humility. Humility towards one another, and notice, humility under the hand of God.

And of course, the two always go together. It's always a great challenge in the church, isn't it? It's especially important when the church is under pressure. It's when we're facing conflict, and hardship, and struggle, and things are difficult, that above all, as somebody has put it, humility is the oil that allows relationships in the church to run smoothly and lovingly.

But of course, we don't tend towards that humility naturally, do we? That's the reason that often relationships in churches don't run smoothly and lovingly.

[ 11 : 07 ] It's because of pride, isn't it? The opposite of humility. We make a suggestion, perhaps, that something should be done, or that something that's being done could be done in a better way.

And we find that our view doesn't prevail. And so we tend to get resentful. We get rather huffy about that. And we allow that attitude to fester in us, because we are not humble.

We are by nature proud. And what we find is, it's very difficult for us to prevent ourselves from griping about that thing to somebody else. And we find that somebody else has something to gripe about, too.

And so we gripe together. And on it goes. And soon we have a little faction. And relationships begin to be strained. That's what happens, isn't it?

And it's all been fomented by pride in our hearts, by the opposite of humility, because we don't like being subject to somebody else's decision.

[ 12 : 08 ] Whether to its leaders, as verse 5 tells us we must be subject to, or, in fact, to anybody else for that matter. We just don't like it. Nothing is more contrary to the disposition of man than subjection, says John Calvin.

Everyone has within him the soul of a king. Isn't that right? And ultimately, of course, the root of all pride towards one another lies in a proud and stubborn resistance to God and to his kingship.

Because we know best. And we want to be king. We want to be independent. We want to be in charge. And that's why verse 5 tells us God opposes the proud.

The proud God will always oppose. But notice he gives grace to the humble. He's quoting from the Old Testament, Proverbs 3, verse 34.

James also quotes it in James chapter 4. Although where James quotes it, he is warning a church that is seriously at odds with itself and already in a situation of conflict.

[ 13 : 20 ] But Peter's emphasis here actually is more encouraging. He's encouraging a church that is facing conflict from outside. And he's encouraging them that God does give grace and God will give grace to them if they're humble when they're under pressure and struggling.

If they look to him humbly for that help, he will give grace. Indeed, verse 10 reminds us he is the God of all grace. He's the God who cares.

And he gives to all who cast their care on him. But you see, to do that entails slaying all pride that's within us in every sphere of our church life.

There's a noticeable progression, do you see here, in this godly submission. The younger to the elders, each to one another, and everyone to God.

Of course, they're all linked. By the younger, he probably means the whole congregation over against those who have the seniority and the standing to have been set apart and regarded as elders.

[ 14 : 28 ] But maybe Peter phrases it the way he does so as to gently emphasize those words to younger ones, especially younger men. Younger men generally find it harder to heed instruction from their elders, don't they?

It's probably a carryover from the teenage years when you just assume that everything that your parents, especially everything your father says, is just idiotic as well as embarrassing. And so I guess even when you're in your 20s, you tend to think that middle-aged or older church leaders are just by definition a bunch of old fogies who doesn't really count for anything.

Peter says that these kind of attitudes are not evidence of great maturity, but evidence of pride. And alas, we know, don't we, that as the proverb says, pride very often comes before a fall.

But more importantly, verse 5 is very clear. Look again. Such pride in the church puts people at odds with God. God opposes the proud. And that kind of attitude denies you the grace that you need so dearly, because God gives grace, but he gives it to the humble, not the proud.

And so not only the younger, but the leaders also, as verse 3 says, leading by example to all. And indeed, verse 5, all of you are to clothe yourselves, he says, to put on humility towards one another.

[ 15 : 59 ] It's an unusual phrase here, but it's certainly not an unusual concept in the New Testament, is it? Read Colossians 3 later on, where Paul tells the church that they have put off the old self and put on the new, and therefore they must be true to what they are now in Christ, putting away anger and malice and slander and lies and so on, and putting on, as God's chosen ones, compassion and kindness and humility and meekness and patience and above all love.

But Peter's saying just exactly the same. Like in chapter 2, verse 1, he said, put away malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, all things associated with pride.

Put all that away, he says, and now put on humility. Clothe yourselves with humility. Maybe Paul's words in Romans 13, verse 14, sum up the thought best of all.

Put on, says Paul, the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on the Lord Jesus. That's surely what Peter is meaning here, isn't it? Many have wondered if Peter is vividly remembering, as he writes this, that scene in the upper room the night before the crucifixion.

Remember, John 13 tells us that Jesus put on the apron of a servant and he knelt down and washed his disciples' feet.

[ 17 : 29 ] The cross was almost upon him, but Jesus clothed himself with a servant's towel and washed their feet. And remember, Peter was outraged and protested back then.

But Jesus submitted himself to be a servant, to serve his followers. And then he went out to Gethsemane and he submitted himself under the mighty hand of God, a hand that led him all the way to the cross.

And so here Peter speaks of humble service and submission to one another and goes on immediately in verse 6, do you see, to speak of submission under God's mighty hand over our lives in all things.

Because this is the only road to glory and to exaltation. Humble yourselves, he says. Be humbled is what it means under God's mighty hand.

So that at the proper time, at the day of his coming in glory, he may exalt you. That phrase, the mighty hand of God, is one you find all through the Old Testament, especially in Deuteronomy, speaking of God's great deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt.

[ 18 : 40 ] He led them out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. It speaks of God's power, his might, to achieve his purposes for his people.

And yet, it also speaks in the Bible of the mystery of how that power sometimes is at work. Job understood that.

With the might of your hand, you persecute me, he said. You toss me around in the roar of the storm. Job 30, verse 21. But had God abandoned Job?

No. Under his mighty hand, he was testing him so as to come forth as gold. Had God abandoned Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane?

He buckled, he agonized under God's mighty hand. He pled with the Father, may this cup pass from me. But he prayed, not my will, but thine.

[ 19 : 44 ] He humbled himself under God's mighty hand, that in due time, God might exalt him. That was the only road to glory for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it is for us. And Peter says that that is our motivation also. Hebrews 12 says that for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame.

And he is seated at the right hand of God. He humbled himself, not chafing against, not opposing God's will for the pattern of his life. However dark, however mysterious it seemed at that time.

Peter tells us in chapter 4, verse 23, he kept on entrusting himself to one who judges justly. And God exalted him through that.

And so also he will exalt us, says Peter, if we will likewise be humbled. If we likewise will submit to God's plan and purpose for our lives on his road to glory, not ours, bearing the cross that he calls us to.

[ 21 : 00 ] Now it's hard. It's very hard to submit humbly like that. When it means real pain, when it means real cost, real heartache, that God might ask from you.

And he might deprive us of something, because otherwise, though we might never understand why, otherwise that thing might cause us to stumble and fall and not reach the glory that he has called us to.

Because only that way he can lead us safely to glory. God's mighty hand sometimes has to humble us like that in order to save us. And we can't understand it.

We don't see. For Paul, remember, it was a painful thorn that God said, had to remain all the way along the road to glory for you, Paul. Without which, God's power could not have been at work in him.

That's what God tells him. So that God might in due time exalt him to glory. Painful thorn for Paul. And for some of us, that cross is very painful indeed.

[ 22 : 13 ] It may be a relationship denied. It may be some ambition unfulfilled. It may be some terrible grief that we carry all the way along the road of life.

It may be a career that is lost. It may be some ailment that has to be borne. It may be something. It may be a hundred other things in the hand of God that though mighty upon us has been overshadowing our life with a great mystery.

We can't fathom it. And we often find ourselves wanting to resist it, wanting to rail against it. So painful, so puzzling, so perplexing it is.

But Peter says the road to glory means we must be humbled, rather, under God's mighty hand, mysterious as it may be, so that in due time, according to the mystery of his sovereignty, we may be exalted.

And that's the motivation, says Peter, for us. But he also shows us, in verse 7, the means by which we show that humble submission. We cast all our anxieties upon him, he says, because he cares for us.

[ 23 : 33 ] Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. We entrust ourselves to him and all our cares and all our burdens we take to him, believing that he does give grace to the humble and trusting that he does indeed care for us.

In other words, to put it simply, we have faith. You hardly find a better definition of faith in the Bible than that there in verse 7. Cast your cares upon him for he cares for you.

That's faith. Pride, you see, means that we trust in ourselves, that we can fix it, that we can solve things, that we can gain for ourselves our heart's desire.

But real faith says, no, we can't. But you can, Lord. And you will your way.

So I will trust you. And I allow you to do it your way in my life, however painful that will be, because I know that you care for me. That's faith.

[ 24 : 44 ] To be humble just means trusting that God does know best and that God will do best for our lives and for our life together as a church. So instead of railing against difficult circumstances and being angry and being resentful at God, we accept hard things at his hand.

We know that it's part of his blessing of us on the road to glory, because we know that he cares for us. I think we've learned a lot about that over these last couple of years as a church fellowship, don't you?

A very great deal about God's mysterious blessing when his hand seems to be heavy upon us. To be clothed with humility means to trust the Savior who cares for us, the shepherd who gave his own life for us, who shed his precious blood for us, as Peter says.

It means to trust him to lead us on his road to glory, his road, his way. And sometimes it's when we're in the darkness of pain and turmoil in life that we question God's love, isn't it?

We doubt his care. We wonder if he's even there at all. Isn't that right? But you see, Peter says, when we recognize the pattern of the Lord Jesus himself, we can see that it's that pattern that's being shared in our life.

[ 26 : 15 ] And isn't that a great comfort to us? To know that our present humbling, whatever that entails for us, that it's shaping us even now for glory, that it's shaping us to be like Jesus.

It's not because God cares nothing for us. It's all because he does care for us and because he's chosen us. And he's done that in order to exalt us with Jesus.

He's leading us on the road to glory. And if we'll submit to his leading under his hand and be gladly a humbled people, adorned with the clothing of the humility of Christ himself, we'll find that despite struggles and hardships, we will know peace in our relationships with one another instead of pride, instead of the performance anxiety that goes with pride.

And we'll find accepting prayer instead of anxious panic prevails in our relationship with God, in our personal life. A church secure on the road to glory will be a church that is adorned with humility.

But of course, that does not mean quietism. It doesn't mean passivity and inaction. Absolutely not. And that's very clear from verses 8 to 9, where Peter says that we will also be a church armed with sobriety.

[ 27 : 46 ] Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around seeking someone to devour. Resist him. In other words, be a watchful people, knowing that ours is the path of an exiled people.

That we are strangers on earth and called to show forth his glory now, along with all of his people in a hostile world. And therefore, we need to know the courage that our present suffering should actually give us.

Courage to resist Satan. Courage to rejoice at the solidarity that we know with all God's people throughout the world when we do suffer. I wonder if you notice that verses 8 and 9 could actually be missed out completely.

Peter's train of thought would make perfect sense, wouldn't it? Going from verse 7, he cares for you, to verse 10, and after you've suffered a little while, God of grace will strengthen you, and so on.

And yet he brings in an apparently jarring note about the devil, the only mention of the devil in the letter. Why does he do that? Well, I think it's because he wants to remind us of the deeper mystery that lies behind and that explains this irrational hostility that there is in the world to Christ and his people.

[ 29 : 06 ] And it is a mystery, isn't it? New Christians often find that, I think. Can't understand why their friends, why their families can't see the truth that's in Jesus when they now can see it so clearly.

How can't you see this? It's so obvious. Well, of course, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4, doesn't he, why they can't see it? It's because the devil, the God of this world, has blinded the eyes of unbelievers.

Oh, why is there such hostility against Christianity and our secular cultures in the West? A faith that has so manifestly been benign, so obviously brought enormous benefits through its influence in our society for hundreds and hundreds of years.

And yet Christianity is opposed constantly in a way that other religions like Buddhism, like Hindus, even like Islam are not. They don't face that same kind of hostility.

Well, the answer, again, lies in a world of darkness above and beyond the world that we can see. Because our struggle, the Bible tells us, is not just against flesh and blood.

[ 30 : 15 ] It is against spiritual forces of evil. It is against powers in the heavenly realms. That's what Paul says in Ephesians 6, and that's what Peter says here.

The reality of the devil, the cosmic powers of darkness, that is a given all the way through the Bible, right from the very beginning, almost to its very last page in Revelation 20, when at last these powers are destroyed forever.

Genesis 3, of course, the serpent is right out in the open, but his shadowy presence stalks the whole story of redemption. Think of the book of Daniel.

We read all about the hostility that God's people face from the powers of Babylon. But, of course, then we're taken behind the scenes, aren't we, to the heavenly, to see the deeper truth that all of this going on on earth simply reflects a war in the heavenly realms.

And so it is right here. Peter tells us that the roaring lion of the Roman Empire is but the earthly mouthpiece of the devil himself, the real enemy.

[ 31 : 25 ] Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 4 of being rescued from the lion's mouth, and he also means the Roman authorities. Verse 13 here, Peter speaks of Babylon.

He almost certainly means Rome. Babylon, all the way through the Bible, is a symbol of the forces of evil arrayed against God and his people here on earth.

Read Revelation again and again. Babylon is the last great enemy that will be destroyed. And so Peter doesn't want us to be ignorant of the true significance, the full significance of the struggles that we face as Christians here on earth.

We are at war with evil. It's already hinted at that back in chapter 2, verse 12. But we need to know, therefore, how to fight, and we need to know how to fight to win.

And to do that, we need to know two things. First, that the devil is real and powerful. There's no room for naivety. There's no room for ignorance.

[ 32 : 34 ] Paul, Peter wants us to be assured of being sober. Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, is on the prowl. He is a powerful beast, and he is seeking to devour you.

The devil has a purpose in the sufferings of Christians. And that purpose is to destroy our faith. That's why we must be alert.

His greatest triumph is this we ignore him if we don't take the devil seriously. Jesus said that to Peter in Gethsemane, Mark 14. Watch and pray so that you don't pray to the devil.

Jesus constantly warns his people that in the last days we are to be watchful. There will be many deceivers, many destroyers of the faith all around and even within the church.

The devil wants to use affliction to make us fall back into this world. He wants to make us want to avoid persecution and avoid suffering and so assimilate back into the ways of the world.

[ 33 : 38 ] That's what a lion's roar does. It strikes fear into you. It strikes intimidation. I remember once in Africa going around a corner sitting on the top of a jeep and we came across two lions right in front of me.

I tell you, I was struck with fear. I nearly jumped off to jump inside the car and the guy driving said, don't move. When your foot touches the ground, he'll be on you.

So I sat on the roof rack shaking the whole car. That's what a lion's roar does. The devil wants to intimidate us. And therefore, he says, we must resist him.

But how on earth do we resist the power of the evil one? Well, not, notice, not by all sorts of bizarre and dramatic gestures.

Peter makes no mention of exorcisms, no mention of mantras, nothing about holy water, nothing about charms, nothing about any sort of voodoo measures, none of that, and certainly none of the kind of dreadful things that we sometimes hear about on the news that seems to emanate mainly, sadly, from some of the West African churches, beating the devil out of little children, drowning them to get evil spirits out of them.

[ 34 : 57 ] Nothing like that here or anywhere else in the Bible, utterly foreign. No, says Peter, verse 9, we resist him by faith, firm in faith, faith that knows something vital.

The devil may indeed have a purpose in our sufferings, but so does God. Yes, the devil is real and powerful. We must know that, says Peter, but secondly, we must know that God is real and powerful and far more powerful than the devil.



Just look at how verses 8 and 9 are enveloped between the mighty hand of God who cares for us in verses 6 and 7 and the God of all grace, verse 10, who has called us to his eternal glory and has eternal power, dominion, to strengthen and establish you forever.

You see, real faith, firm biblical faith, knows that even Satan's worst arrows are used by God not to bring destruction but to bring deliverance to his own people.

God's purpose in these trials is to test the genuineness of our faith that will result in praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus. That's why he says in verse 9 that all these same kinds of sufferings are being not experienced but accomplished or brought to completion in all our brethren throughout the world.

[ 36 : 32 ] That's what the word means. God is accomplishing his purposes and bringing them to completion through these sufferings by which the devil is trying to destroy us.

You see, faith knows what Joseph knew. Do you remember? That what man and what the devil purposes for evil, God purposes for good. And what Paul tells us that these very things, these perplexing sufferings in a world of sin and Satan that all these things even are working together for good to those who love God who are called according to his purpose.

God purposes it for good and his purposes will never fail because he has called us, says Peter, to eternal glory.

Now shouldn't that give us great courage? We're called in Christ, says verse 10. So we are not like the first Adam who was devoured by the devil's roar.

We are the people of Jesus, the last Adam who triumphed over the devil in the wilderness and in Gethsemane and on the cross itself by his firm faithfulness.

[ 37 : 52 ] and we're armed with his mind. Peter told us back in chapter 4 verse 1. The spirit of his glory is upon us when we suffer chapter 4 verse 14 and we are called in Christ and so we can resist the devil firm in faith because we know that somehow mysteriously whatever the evil one's purpose is to destroy God sovereignly overrules for his own purpose and for our ultimate glory.

That means like Job and like Jesus we can say though he slay me yet will I trust him. We can say like the servant of Isaiah chapter 50 he who vindicates me is near who will contend with me who is my adversary behold the Lord helps me because he overcame our enemy we shall overcome him too.

The most important thing the Bible teaches about the devil is that Jesus Christ has conquered him and that victory Christ gives to us his people to use against him.

I can't remember how many times I heard my father saying those words but how true they are. he is real yes he is he is still a real enemy he seeks to devour yes so we must be armed with sobriety not naivety but we can resist him firm in the faith that knows even his worst is only accomplishing God's eternal purpose for all of his people all over the world so we can have courage to resist Satan and to rejoice in a sovereign God who has him on a leash only allowing him to do that which he purposes for our ultimate good.

Do you believe that? you see it's to this sovereign grace of the eternal God which Peter began his letter with that he comes back to right at its very end in verses 10 and 11 because he reminds us that the true church of Jesus Christ is anchored in eternity be a certain people Peter says knowing that ours is the privilege of an elect people special to God chosen to share certainly in that glory to come and therefore knowing the confidence that our permanent calling gives us ours is a gospel of sovereign grace and sovereign power sovereign dominion to keep us for certain glory Peter ends his letter here not with an exhortation but with a promise verse 10 he has called us in Christ and he will strengthen us and enable us to persevere to the end

[ 41 : 00 ] I wonder if you doubt that sometimes we often do don't we we often wonder if we will make it to the end without being shamed sometimes we realize how weak we are how in despair we are over some sin we wonder don't we whether God has sufficient grace even to lift us up one more time just one more time well friends if that is how you think look at verse 10 he is the God of all grace grace I don't know why ESV has reversed the word order here from the original Greek I prefer the authorized version where we have this verse about the devil in verse 9 and then verse 10 begins but the God of all grace it's one of those great but gods that changes everything grace is one of Peter's favorite words how precious it was to him how precious it is to any who like him have fallen so badly and shamed themselves and disowned the

Savior but the God of all grace has called us in Christ to his eternal glory he has already anchored us in that glory and having suffered a little while that is what we will experience you see the contrast between a little while and eternity Paul says to the Corinthians that our slight momentary afflictions are preparing us for an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all comparison so often our afflictions seem never ending don't they when we're facing it when we're in the midst of a time of spiritual darkness when things are collapsing round about us and it seems to just go on and on and on and on but Peter says the it's just a little while a nanosecond in the timeline of

God's glorious future in which we are anchored already in Christ and that's the promise from the God to whom belongs all the dominion all the power forever and ever says verse 11 see how always God's commands and his promises come together and come inseparably to us in the Bible indeed all his commands are always held between and founded upon his great promises of grace God gives grace to the humble verse 5 that's a promise verse 10 the God of all grace has called us to eternal glory after we've suffered a little while that's a promise and therefore we're to be humbled and watchful and resist the devil firm in faith and another promise he will himself restore and confirm and strengthen and establish you can stand firm in faith because he will make you firm uses four words really to say the same thing over again to din it into our heads so that we get it that it's really true a comprehensive picture of what

God's grace in Christ is doing to us and doing with us all through the trials of our faith as we walk this road to glory even when it may seem that the world and the devil are most assailing us even when it may seem that God is most invisible that God is absent no even then in fact especially then he himself says Peter is restoring you he's putting you lovingly and gently back together again mending what's broken and defaced as a master craftsman mends and restores a great painting back to its former glory he's making you strong and firm forever he is establishing you like a stone set in concrete as part of his dwelling place where he will dwell with his people forever because we are a people anchored in eternity by the

God to whom belongs all the power for eternity this is the gospel when a man has faith in Christ for salvation someone has said it means that out of the mystery of eternity there has come a loving and a mighty hand that lays a hold upon his life claiming it for an eternity of joy and blessedness glorious beyond all understanding and almost beyond belief now says Peter set that over against your trial whatever it may be however severe it may seem wherever it may touch you there is no possible combination of adverse circumstances in our experience in which this glorious truth will not make all the difference that's what this whole letter has been all about verse 12 this is the true grace of God a promise anchored in eternity and therefore a command that we can embrace with real courage and confidence amid great comfort stand firm in it in the grace that adorns us with humility as we subject ourselves to one another and to

[ 46 : 42 ]    God's hand of providence in our lives and which arms us with sobriety as we resist the devil and rejoice that even his worst is only achieving God's purposes for our glory this is the road to glory for every true church of Christ it's the way of an Easter people exiled now but elect for eternity and following our Savior on his road to glory who for the joy set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God to paraphrase Angus Maclay in his little book we are called he says to follow Jesus through Maundy Thursday as we show prayerful dependence on God and humbly serve one another we follow him through Good Friday as we stand firm trusting God even though it may bring the cup of bitter suffering and we look forward to following Jesus to the resurrection glory of Easter day fully restored through his grace and power but to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you leaving you the exact pattern that you might follow in his steps this is the grace of God says Peter stand firm in it for we are an Easter people and hallelujah is our eternal song let's pray heavenly father help us help us to walk the road to glory with the Lord Jesus Christ as a true church as your true people thank you that you have walked that way for us and now walk that way with us and may we be conscious always of your great grace of your loving care and of your dominion and power to restore and confirm and strengthen and establish us against every foe for we ask it in Jesus name

Amen