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A Final Word, 4

1 Peter 5:5-14

In 2008 I had back surgery! At that time, I'd been working on a herniated disc for years (an MRI at the time showed that 40% of my disc was prolapsed). But then I went to a certain type of doctor who made an adjustment to my spine which was devastating! The subsequent MRI indicated that my disc was now 90% prolapsed. It was the worse pain I have ever had in my life.

When the day came for the surgery, I arrived at the hospital early in the morning where after some initial paperwork, I was wheeled into a surgery prep room. Here I changed into a gown

and got hooked up to all sorts of lines. And the one thing that sticks out in my mind about my pre-op treatment was that every medical personal who attended me explained what they were going to do before they did it. Now, I'm personally against needles much less pain! Yet because of their explanation, the pre-op up to the time of the surgery was incredibly easy... no fear, no guesswork, no surprises!

And Peter is giving us an explanation to his persecuted brethren of what to expect. This epistle speaks about suffering throughout because it was written during the Neronian persecution. So, Peter gives God's perspective on suffering. The text is akin to what Christ told His disciples in John.

John 14:29, "And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe."

Peter now tells the believers that earthly suffering is not truly harmful.

1 Peter 5:10b, "And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called¹ you to His eternal glory in Christ..."

This is an incredible statement, packed with meaning explaining the "eternal glory" to which we have been "called." Peter has referenced this no less than four times in this epistle², with our text being the fifth! As to the "glory" we shall attain in Christ when He returns, consider just a couple of passages.

1 Corinthians 15:35-37, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?' You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else."

Using an analogy from farming, Paul references the fact that when a seed is sown, that which comes up is completely different from the original form of the seed. A living plant doesn't look like its seed! And so, it will be with our glorified bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body* [subject to deterioration and eventual death], it is raised an imperishable *body* [which means the glorified body will never deteriorate, decay, or die]; 43 it is sown in dishonor [we are born in sin and so under the wrath of God], it is raised in glory [this speaks of the undefiled state of eternity and the fact that at that time we will NOT be *simultaneously just and sinful*. RATHER, we will ever, only, and always be spotless and clean and so the object of God's good pleasure for eternity]; it is sown in weakness [this is speaking of the lack of our physical strength and endurance as well as our lack of resistance to disease, injury, and illness], it is raised in power [in the New Heavens and Earth, there no longer is disease, sickness, injury, illness, or death! And anything we want to do, we will be able to do!]; 44 it is sown a natural body [which we'll define in a moment], it is raised a spiritual body [a πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*) body]. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*."

Anticipating that this last statement could possibly mislead some to think that in the final state we will be disembodied spirits (and so non-corporal beings), Paul gave the following explanation:

1 Corinthians 15:47-49, “The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy [the idea behind this is that we have been made to fit the environment in which we live; and so, as there is air, we have lungs. If we were from a ‘watery’ existence, we’d have gills!]; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne [or reflect] the image of the earthy, we shall also bear [reflect] the image of the heavenly.”

Paul is getting at that the glorified existence we shall have in heaven that will be specially created to fit the world/environment of the New Heavens and Earth -- that is what is meant by a πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*) body! Anything and everything required of us in glory will be attainable as we will have a body specially designed for that world!

Now as wonderful as this is, there is more. For the text before us says that we “have been called^{3,4} to His [God’s] eternal glory in Christ⁵.” What specifically does this mean? Simply, that as Christ is (in His glorified body), someday we likewise shall be like Him.

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

This is the “eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) awaiting each of us in Christ! And so, if you are in Christ, then what we’ve just seen is your future! Someday, this is what you and I shall be!⁶ It is guaranteed!

That means that no amount of hostility, torture, disease, or injury on this side of the grave can negatively impact what awaits us in Christ. How is it that we can be so confident? Because we have been “called to this eternal glory in Christ”! This is a Divine summons by a Being who -- in a moment we’ll see -- is the King of kings and Lord of lords and who reigns over this world! As such, NO THING in the heavens or the earth can thwart God’s plan when it comes to the future that awaits us in Christ!

In light of this we must see that earthly suffering is not truly harmful! Yes, it may damage our earthly body and maybe even cause emotional/spiritual duress, but in the end, it will be seen for what it really is: “momentary and light” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)!⁷

From this we might therefore be tempted to think of earthly suffering as worthless! And yet, here is where the glory of God shines through. Ultimately for the worldling, earthly suffering is worthless; but *Not So For The Believer!*

For the believer earthly suffering is not worthless.

1 Peter 5:10, “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called

you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself⁸ perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

This is a most amazing truth which really ought NOT to be a surprise! If God could take the worst that Satan could throw at Christ (the cross) and transform it into the greatest victory via His resurrection, then He most certainly can use the sufferings of this present life unto our health and growth in grace. And that is exactly what He does! In and through the suffering:

- He Himself will perfect us. The word is *καταρτίζω* (*katartizō*) which speaking of bringing something to wholeness, completeness, or maturity.⁹ In reference to the Christian undergoing trial or difficulty, it speaks of ‘making them fully prepared and complete’ with respect to any resource or ability which they may have lost on account of suffering.¹⁰
- He Himself will confirm us. The word is *στηρίζω* (*stērizō*) which means to set fast;¹¹ in a gardening context the term would refer to the transplanting of a tree into good soil where it then takes deep root and so becomes immovable! As such, it speaks of setting something or someone firmly in a position, a rightful privilege, or responsibility which suffering could potentially rob us of. Practically speaking, this is God making us firm in our devotion and trust in Him.
- He Himself will strengthen us. The word *σθενόω* (*sthenōō*) which means to make sturdy.¹² Thinking of the last term, there are some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force, vigor, and so “strength.”¹³ Accordingly, the word speaks of building up and so reinforcing the believer when it comes to any weakness or inadequacy which suffering may have exposed.
- He Himself will establish us. The word is *θεμελιόω* (*themelioō*) which means to lay as a foundation and so is translated as “found,” “establish,” or “firmly place.”¹⁴ The focus here is on our endurance or perseverance!¹⁵ When a Christian is persecuted or beset with illness or injury, it is God’s plan to use the illness to make the previous three traits last!

Combined¹⁶, the picture here is one of strength, immovability, revitalization, restoration, and so endurance/perseverance! So, while Satan might endeavor to use trial and difficulty to get us to question God or even forsake Him, the Lord over-rules the devil’s schemes by using the very thing which would hurt us to strengthen and complete us!

Psalm 149:4, “For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.”

And so, what Satan might mean for evil, God uses for good in our lives unto the ultimate end of fitting us for glory! Accordingly, the call of Scripture is to work with the trials and difficulties of this life -- really to work actively, along with God -- that the trial might produce in us growth, maturation, trust, and reliance upon Christ.

James 1:2-4, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing

that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result [in other words, work with your suffering that it might produce this glorious end...], that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Romans 5:3-4, “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations [IOW, we are called to make use of our tribulations unto our growth in grace. Why? It is because of what we just saw in our text... God uses trial to grow us- as Paul continues...] knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope.”

It was from these passages the Puritans coined the expression, “Improving upon our Suffering”. That is the idea which is found in passages like the one before us. Because God has deigned to use trial and difficulty in our ongoing sanctification, the call is for us to work with God, NOT against Him! So, let us be careful that we do NOT “kick against the goads” during suffering. Rather, let us work with it that it might produce in us “an eternal weight of God!” That brings us to the sixth and final characteristic of suffering from God’s perspective earthly suffering is under God’s complete, sovereign control.

1 Peter 5:11, “To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Peter has already used this language in his discussion on spiritual gifts. Do you recall how he ended his treatment?

1 Peter 4:11d: “...to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Peter essentially says the same thing here. You may recall that the expression “to whom belongs the glory” is a reference to praise and adoration that is due God alone. The second statement, “to whom belongs the... dominion” signifies strength, and here denotes God’s ability to dominate by which everything in the universe is under His sovereign and unassailable control!

That is the focus of Peter as he closes out his treatment on Suffering and the Christian. Based on all that we have seen -- how God rules and over-rules the wicked schemes of Satan -- Peter ends with much more than an ascription of praise. Rather, he closes with an affirmation that God alone is the sovereign One who rules over this world! “To Him be dominion” is a recognition that all things are according to His sovereign plan which is unthwartable! Think of it! Just as you cannot flee from God’s presence (cf. Psalm 139:7), so you cannot flee from God’s providential care by which He upholds and determines all things by the word of His power! This truth is found throughout Scripture.

Psalm 115:3, “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”

Proverbs 21:1, “The king’s heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

Daniel 4:34b-3, speaking of God, “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are

accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’”

If there should be any doubt here, consider (I’ve cut this list down from over fifty examples to fifteen).

- Eli’s wicked sons did not listen to their father’s advice which would have saved them, “for the Lord desired to put them to death.” (1 Samuel 2:25b)
- King Amaziah of Judah did not heed the warning issued to him by Joash of Israel, “For it was from God, that He might deliver them into the hand of Joash...” (2 Chronicle 25:20a)
- The Psalmist declares that the number of a man’s days is ordained by God “when as yet there is none of them,” Psalm 31:15; 39:5; 139:16. He also said, “The Lord does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and in all their depths” (135:6).
- The wise man of Proverbs 16 declares God’s sovereign rule over men when he says: “1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord”; again, “4 The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil”; yet again, “9 The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps”; and finally, “33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”¹⁷
- In Isaiah 45:6b-7, God declares that it is He, the Lord, who forms and creates darkness, “causing peace and creating calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.”¹⁸
- Echoing the same theme, Amos rhetorically queried, “When a calamity comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?” (3:6).
- Solomon made the incredible statement, “In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider- God has made the one as well as the other...” (Ecclesiastes 7:14)
- Perhaps no declaration sums up the attitude of the Old Testament witness to God’s awesome sovereignty over men and nations more majestically than Isaiah 40, “15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust... 17 Before Him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by Him as worthless and less than nothing. 22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers... 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.”
- When we come to the New Testament, we note that John traced Israel’s rejection of Jesus to God’s divine providence, “For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ‘He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them.’” (John 12:39-40)¹⁹
- Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit- fruit that will last” (John 15:16) And in the same vein, on another occasion He said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14)
- Peter declared that Christ’s death on the cross was in accordance with the “predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.” (Acts 2:23)²⁰
- The entire church in Jerusalem affirmed God’s sovereignty over life as they prayed, “For

truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.” (Acts 4:27-28)

- In the book of Acts Luke explicitly states when it came to the salvation of certain Gentiles, “...as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48)
- Listen to the glory Paul attributed to God when he wrote, “God has chosen [the Christian] from the beginning for salvation” (2 Thessalonians 2:13), and that God saved the Christian “not according to works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted [the Christian] in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” (2 Timothy 1:9)
- In 1 Peter 2:8b, Peter explained why so many stumble over Christ, “...for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.”

Clearly, there is NOT a rogue atom in all the universe. The movement of a dust particle which is floating right now on a planet in a galaxy light years away is determined by the sovereign control of our Lord who, “...upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3)! All of this is what is meant when Peter said in our passage, “To Him *be* dominion forever and ever.”

Now, why is Peter laying stress on this as he closed out his treatment on the Christian and Suffering? Because when we are going through suffering, it is easy to wonder who truly is in control! Accordingly, Peter here does NOT leave it to speculation. The One who has planned and promised is the One who has the power to bring it to pass!

Peter wanted his brethren to understand that where they were is exactly where their good, sovereign, and loving God wanted them to be (that is a summary of all the “suffering” passages in 1 Peter). Satan may have meant it for evil, BUT God will always overrule both for His and our good! Such has and will always be the case, “Forever and ever! Amen!²¹”- the “amen” is the sound of a slam dunk!

So Christian, will the flames harm you? Will you succumb to the water? In the end, will Satan succeed in his desire to keep you from Christ? God’s word is very clear here: No Way!²²

Isaiah 43:1-3a, “But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...’”

Spurgeon wrote of this:

Going to prison with Christ will bring us into the palace with Christ; smarting with Christ will bring us into reigning with Christ; being ridiculed and slandered and despised for Christ’s sake will bring us to be sharers of His honor and glory and immortality. Who would not be with Christ in His humiliation if this is the guarantee that we shall be with Him in His glory?” (*Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

End Note(s)

¹ “The word ‘calling’ (*kalesas*) has occurred previously in Peter (1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:9) with the same meaning it has here. We have another indication that as the letter concludes, crucial terms used previously are reprised to remind readers of the letter’s central themes.” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, p. 244)

² cf. 1:4–7; 4:13; 5:1, 4.

³ “Calling is the first drop of mercy that trickles into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. Not the first in order of time with God, but the first in order of time with us.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

⁴ “...it is no wonder that commentators argue over whether ‘in Christ’ fits with ‘glory’ or with ‘called.’ Grammatically one can argue either way. On the one hand, we would expect it to fit with ‘glory,’” for it is closest to that word, while on the other hand, the lack of the article before ‘in’ makes the phrase flow together and thus links it to ‘calling.’ But given that the phrase is a whole, it is more likely that Peter made no distinction—both the calling and the glory are in Christ.” (Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT, p. 195).

⁵ The language here speaks of the glorious doctrine of Union with Christ! This is the basis for our glorification.

⁶ Spurgeon wrote of this, “Does not the very word astound you? ‘Glory!’ Surely that belongs to God alone! Yet the Scripture says ‘glory,’ and glory it must mean, for it never exaggerates. Think of glory for us who have deserved eternal shame! Glory for us poor creatures who are often ashamed of ourselves!” (Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter, 1 Pe 5:10)

⁷ “The glory that God has in reserve for His chosen will never come to an end. It will stay with us, and we shall stay with it, forever. It will always be glory, too. Its brightness will never become dim; we shall never be tired of it or sated with it. After ten thousand thousand millions of years in heaven our happiness shall be as fresh as when it first began. Those are no fading laurels that surround immortal brows. Eternal glory knows no diminution. Can you imagine a man being born at the same time that Adam was created and living all these thousands of years as a king like Solomon, having all he could desire? His would seem to be a glorious life. But if at the end of seven thousand years that man needs to die, what has it profited him? His glory is all over now; its fires have died out in ashes. But you and I, when we once enter glory, shall receive what we can neither lose nor leave. Eternity! Eternity! This is the sweetness of all our future bliss. Rejoice, you saintly ones! Take your harps down from the willows, any of you who are mourning, and sing- ‘God has called us to his eternal glory,’ and this is to be our portion world without end.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

⁸ While the verbs involved are future (not the optatives found in most closing blessings), it is clear from their content that some of this is taking place even within their present suffering; that is, God is producing their good out of their enemies’ intended evil.” (Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT, p 195)

⁹ cf. Phil. 1:6; Hebrews 2:10; 10:1; James 1:4.

¹⁰ “If there could be such a thing as a man in whom sanctification began, but in whom God the Spirit ceased to work, if there could be a being so unhappy as to be called by grace and to be deserted before he was perfected, there would not be among the damned in hell a more unhappy wretch. It would be no blessing for God to begin to bless if He did not perfect. It would be the grandest curse that Omnipotent hatred itself could pronounce to give a man grace at all if that grace did not carry him to the end and land him safely in heaven. I must confess that I would rather endure the pangs of that dread archangel, Satan, throughout eternity than have to suffer as one whom God once loved but whom He cast away. But such a thing shall never be.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

¹¹ cf. Pss. 90:17; 119:106; Romans 15:8; 1 Corinthians 1:8.

¹² cf. Lk. 22:32; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3; James 5:8.

¹³ “The Christians of this age are very feeble things. Some of those old Puritans, when we read of their devotion and of the hours they spent in prayer, seem to have as much grace as any hundred of us. The stream ran deep. But nowadays the banks are broken down and great meadows have been flooded with it. So far so good. But while the surface has been enlarged I fear the depth has been frightfully diminished. And this may account for it: that while our piety has become shallow our strength has

become weak.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

¹⁴ cf. Pss. 7:9; 89:2; Is. 9:7; Romans 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

¹⁵ “May God fulfill to you this rich benediction, that you may not be as the smoke out of a chimney, which is blown away by the wind- that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away. But may you be established; may every good thing that you have be an abiding thing.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, 1 Pe 5:10)

¹⁶ “While we have tried to give careful definitions of these four terms, it would be wrong to try to see some new idea in each of them. What Peter has done is pile up a number of closely related terms that together by their reinforcing one another give a multiple underscoring of the good that God is intending for them and even now is producing in their suffering.” (Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT, p. 196)

¹⁷ cf. similar statements in Prov. 19:21; 20:24; 21:30-31.

¹⁸ The word in the Hebrew for “calamity” (e.g., Is. 46:7) is רָעָה (*ra*) which is the same word used for “evil” (cf. 2 Samuel 14:17; 19:35; 1 Kgs. 3:9; Is. 7:15; Gen. 2:9, 17)! Does this make God the author of evil? Absolutely not! However, this does mean that in and through all things He is ordains evil and is sovereign over it (cf. again Gen. 50:20)!

¹⁹ Cf. also Is. 6:9-10; Mk. 4:11-12; Romans 9:18-24; 11:32.

²⁰ Cf. also Matthew 18:7; 26:24; Mk. 14:21; Lk. 17:1; 22:22.

²¹ “The doxology, as is typical, concludes with ‘amen,’ signifying that Peter longed for the day when God’s rule will be evident to all, that he anticipated the day when suffering is past and glory and peace and joy reign forevermore.” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, p. 246)

²² Consider the following Case Study on Suffering: As you know, of the 12 apostles Peter was the most outspoken, brash, and impulsive! It was Peter who (1) Rebuked the Lord saying that Christ had it all wrong, Matthew 16:22, (2) Subsequently called “Satan” by Christ, Matthew 16:23, (3) Announced that the rest of the disciples would betray Christ, but he would never, Mk. 14:29, (4) Not once or twice, but three times denied Christ (Matthew 26:69-75a) whereupon he went away and wept, Matthew 26:75b, (5) Stood condemned before God for representing the gospel as based on works, Gal. 2:11-14. Peter’s life and ministry as an apostle clearly was far from stellar! This no doubt is why Satan demanded permission to “sift him like wheat” which was granted!!! ¶ Yet how did God use Peter’s struggles and failure? He strengthened him to the point where he could write the epistle which is in your hands this morning by which he gave so much encouragement and support to struggling saints!!! ¶ Do you understand what this means? Peter is the “Poster Child” when it comes to the glorious truths we’ve learned here about Suffering. What Peter exhorted here was not theoretical to him, but the very truths that enabled him, “...after falling seven times, to rise again.” (Prov. 24:17) And insofar as God enables us to accept these truths and apply them to our lives, we too will stand in the midst of trial, for God will enable us to stand indeed!