

**DIVINE ASSURANCE FOR CHRISTIAN SUFFERING**  
**1 Peter 5:10-11**

“The devil sure is busy.” This is how Christians often respond when bad things happen. It may be a trial we are undergoing. Or it can be a trial someone else is going through. But when something happens that is unpleasant, unending, or unexplainable, we often respond by saying, “The devil sure is busy.” It’s one of the things church folk say.

I want to take issue with that statement. But I don’t object to this statement because it is true. The devil is busy. **Ephesians 6:10-11** says, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”* The devil is so busy that you need the whole armor of God to stand your ground against his evil schemes. That’s the truth. But it is not the whole truth. I submit that the devil is not the only one who is busy when bad things happen. God is also at work. **Romans 8:28** says, *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* Satan is busy at work against you. But God is at work on your behalf. You may not find “Under Construction” signs hanging around. You may not see the tracks of heavy machinery. You may not hear the sound of heavenly jackhammers in the distance. But the master architect and builder is busy at work in your situation right now. **Philippians 1:6** says, *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”* The devil is busy. But Satan is not busier the God. That’s the message of **1 Peter 5:10-11**. Christians can face suffering with the assurance that God is working it out for your good and his glory.

**1 Peter 5:10-11** records the closing benediction and doxology of the epistle. It is the climax of the letter. Peter wrote this letter to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor that were beginning to face sharp opposition because of their faith. It would soon become all-out persecution under the Roman Emperor, NERO. Peter writes to exhort the saints to be faithful Christians in a hostile world. Our text concludes the main body of the letter. It is a part of a larger paragraph consisting of verses 8-11. Verse 8 warns of *the enemy’s attacks*: *“Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* Verse 9 explains the believer’s response: *“Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”* Verses 10-11 then make it clear that Christian suffering is not ultimately a conflict with Satan. We have a divine ally. When you stake a stand for the Lord, you will never have to stand alone. Christians can face suffering with the assurance that God is working it out for your good and his glory. **1 Peter 5:10-11** teaches three ways God is at work in the midst of our suffering.

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**I. GOD LOVES YOU IN YOUR SUFFERING.**

The central statement of verse 10 is the reference to God it makes. Peter calls God *“the God of all grace.”* This is the only place in the Bible where this title is used for God. And it is used in the context of suffering. Peter seeks to comfort these persecuted Christians by highlighting the character of God. What attribute of God would you point a suffering person to? Peter points them to grace. What is *grace*? Grace is undeserved favor bestowed upon the undeserving. Peter declares that God is a God of grace. In a real sense, this is the message of the epistle. **1 Peter 5:12** says: *“By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.”* The hope of Christians who suffer is that we can stand firm in the grace of God. Yet Peter does not content himself to call God a God of grace. He calls God *“the God of all grace.”* In other words, God is the ultimate source and exclusive distributor of grace. **Hebrews 4:16** says, *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.”*

We typically appeal to the grace of God for our sins rather than our sufferings. We often think we need grace to get invited into God’s family, but that we do not need grace anymore after we are in. And we try our hardest to be on our best behavior so that we will not get kicked out of the family and thrown out of the house. But the truth is that we need grace to sustain us just as much as we need it to save us. Yes, we need grace because we are sinners who are in constant need of forgiveness. But we also need grace because we are saints who have problems and burdens and struggles that we cannot deal with on our own. Grace is not just about the incarnate Christ dying vicariously on the cross. It is about that which brought Jesus to earth in the first place – the love of God. That is why we sing the first verse of *Amazing Grace*,” but we also sing the third verse:

**THROUGH MANY DANGERS, TOILS, AND SNARES,  
I HAVE ALREADY COME.  
IT WAS GRACE THAT BROUGHT ME SAFE THIS FAR,  
AND GRACE THAT WILL LEAD ME ON**

Grace is not just the forgiveness of God that pardons. It is also the love of God that protects. So it is appropriate that in this passage that seeks to give hope to suffering believers, Peter calls God *“the God of all grace.”* This divine title expands on **1 Peter 4:10** where Peter refers to *“God’s varied grace.”* It is multicolored, manifold grace. God has grace to meet your needs whatever they may be. And it will never run out. You may be facing...

- **Back-bending burdens**
- **Deep-seated sorrows**
- **Heart-breaking traumas**
- **Long-lasting trials**
- **Mind-boggling pressures**
- **Pain-staking decisions.**
- **Soul-wrenching disappointments**

But God is able to meet your needs. He is the God of all grace. Sociologists have a theory that they refer to as “the looking glass self.” It basically means that a

person becomes what the most important person in his or her life thinks they are. I agree with that. Our lives are often shaped by the opinions of those who we hold in high esteem – be it a parent or spouse or peer group or whoever. But I wonder how our lives would change if we truly believed the Bible’s astounding words about God’s love for us. How would we live if we looked in the mirror and saw ourselves as God sees us? What if we truly lived in light of the grace of God?

**John 1:16** says, “*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*” To be a Christians is to receive the fullness of God that moves us from one state of grace to the next. According to **Ephesian 2:8-9**, the Christian life begins with saving grace. According to **Romans 5:17**, we become righteous through sanctifying grace. According to **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**, we do ministry through serving grace. In **2 Corinthians 8:1-9**, giving is pictured as sacrificing grace. In **2 Corinthians 12:9**, Paul explains how he was given suffering grace that was sufficient to help him deal with his thorn in the flesh. In **Colossians 3:16** we see believers can have singing grace. In **Colossians 4:6**, we can have speaking grace. And in **2 Timothy 2:1**, Paul speaks of strengthening grace. God is the God of all grace. **James 4:6** says: “*He gives more grace.*”

**AMAZING GRACE SHALL ALWAYS BE MY SONG OF PRAISE  
FOR IT WAS GRACE THAT BOUGHT MY LIBERTY.  
I’LL NEVER KNOW JUST HOW HE CAME TO LOVE ME SO  
BUT HE LOOKED BEYOND MY FAULTS AND SAW MY NEEDS.**

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## **II. GOD PUTS A LIMIT ON YOUR SUFFERING.**

Verse 10 says, “*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*” This verse teaches us two ways God puts a limit on our suffering.

### **A. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF GOD’S LIMIT ON YOUR SUFFERING**

This text confronts us with the reality of Christian suffering. Even though we are God’s elect people, this does not mean we are exempt from suffering. **1 Peter 4:12** says, “*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*” Far from promising a life without suffering, Peter warns Christians to expect it. It comes with the territory. **Philippians 1:27** says, “*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffering for his sake.*” But there is encouragement in the midst of suffering. Verse 10 says it is only for “*a little while.*” Christian suffering is temporary. Pain, sorrow, and hardship come with a predetermined expiration date. Trouble does not last always. The fact that suffering is only for a while does not guarantee that our suffering will be brief. In fact, you may have to suffer throughout your life. But know that your season of suffering may

be extended but it is not indefinite. At some point, God will bring you up, bring you through, and bring you out.

**Philips Brooks, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century preacher, was known for his gentle spirit and patience. But one day a friend walked into Brooks' study and found him pacing back and forth, terribly agitated. The friend was shocked. "Dr. Brooks, he asked, "What on earth is the matter?" "I am in a hurry," Brooks replied, "But God is not."**

Isn't that the way it often seems to be with God?

You desperately want something that you do not have, something apparently legitimate and worthwhile. But you are forced to wait for it. And you get to the point where there seems to be no end in sight. And the pain becomes a dull, daily ache. And you cannot do anything without thinking about the thing you are waiting for. Do you ever think that God is taking his own sweet time with you? You keep asking; "When? How long? At what time? And all you get in return in this cryptic, frustrating answer, "In a little while." Why is that? It seems to be that it is God's great philosophy that we can deal with almost anything as long as we know that it is only temporary. So rather than telling us how long the thing will last, scripture constantly reminds us that it will not last forever. Trouble does not last always.

**Psalm 30:5** says, "*For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.*"

**Isaiah 40:31** says, "*But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*"

**Romans 8:18** says, "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*"

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** says, "*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are unseen. For the things that are not seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*"

**Galatians 6:9** says, "*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*"

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## **B. THE PROOF OF GOD'S LIMIT ON YOUR SUFFERING.**

Verse 10 says, "*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*" The title, "*the God of all grace,*" focuses on God's character. God is a God of sovereign grace. But the statement, "*who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ,*" focuses on God's activity. It is about what God has done by his sovereign grace. God has called us. It is GOD'S EFFECTUAL CALL. When you heard the gospel and repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, it was because God called you to himself in salvation. **1 Peter 2:9** says: "*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own*

*possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”*

God has called you to his eternal glory. Feel the tension between the believer’s past and future. God’s gracious call covers our past and gives us a new identity. But God’s gracious call also covers our future and gives us a new destiny. We are called to his *glory*. God saved us that we might share his glory. We have been called from dust to glory. And this is no temporary arrangement. God has called you to his *eternal* glory. There is nothing you can do to be called into God’s eternal glory. And there is nothing you can do to be kicked-out of God’s eternal glory. God has called us to his eternal glory *in Christ*. We are sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God. But God sent his Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. He lived a righteous life. Died on the cross as our substitute. And he rose from the dead to validate his redemptive work. And all who trust the blood and righteousness of Christ are bound for eternal glory. Consider the wonderful description of salvation in this phrase: *“who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ.”*

- **We see the source of our salvation: God called us.**
- **We see the agency of our salvation: God called us by or in Christ Jesus.**
- **We see the purpose of our salvation: God called us in Christ for his glory.**
- **We see the nature of our salvation: God called us to his eternal glory in Christ.**

We are saved. And we are saved forever. And if we are saved eternally, then our sufferings can only last for a little while. The proof that our suffering is just for a little while is the fact that we are saved forever. God has called us to eternal glory in Christ. God has plans for us that transcend our suffering. And since God has called us to his eternal glory in Christ, then you can count on the fact that your season of suffering must end in a little while. The suffering may end while you are still alive. Or it may end in death. But either way it must end someday. Why? Because you are saved, that’s why. You are saved forever.

This is a word of rebuke against those who suggest that Christians talk about salvation too much and that we need to stop talking about heaven so much and help people live here and now. Listen, it is the very act and process of talking about heaven that helps us live here and now. **1 Corinthians 15:19** says, *“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* But the good news is that in Christ we have hope that transcends the grave. So, it ultimately does not matter if I have health or wealth down here. God has called me to his eternal glory in Christ. And **Romans 11:29** says, *“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”* Because I am in God’s eternal plans, I can deal with anything for a little while.

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### **III. GOD IS MAKING SURE YOU LEARN FROM THE BATTLE.**

**1 Peter 5:10** says: *“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”* In this verse, Peter not only affirms God’s gracious character and eternal purpose, but he also affirms God’s sovereign work in the midst

of our suffering. Note the phrase: “*will himself*.” This phrase is subtle but emphatic. A good leader knows how to delegate work. But a good leader also knows what not to delegate. Here we see God’s undelegated work. There are no means of grace mentioned here. When Christians suffer, we have the assurance of God’s personal presence, concern, and intervention. God himself “will”. The grammar of the text is a statement of fact that will come to pass in the future. It hasn’t happened yet. But we can count it done with confidence in the faithfulness of God. There are four wonderful things God is working to accomplish in and through your suffering.

**GOD WILL RESTORE YOU.** The word translated “*restore*” means to fit into place to fulfill a purpose. It can be translated two ways. It can mean “to restore,” as it is used in the ESV. Is us used that way in **Matthew 4:21** and **Mark 1:19** of fishermen mending their nets. It is also used that way in **Galatians 6:1**, where the spiritually mature people of the church are called to restore those who are caught in transgression. Or the word can mean, “to perfect.” This is the ethical sense of the word. It is the process of becoming what you are meant to be. I think this is how the word should be read here. Indeed, God can restore what suffering has broken. But God has a higher purpose than that. God is at work to use your suffering as a tool to cause you to become what he has called you to be. **Psalm 119:71** says, “*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*” This is the sanctifying power of Christian suffering. God can use suffering to make you what you are called to be in Christ.

**GOD WILL CONFIRM YOU.** The word “*confirm*” means to fix something in such a way that it is stable. It is the picture of buttressing a thing so that it is firm and does not collapse. In **Luke 22:31-32**, Jesus says to Peter, “*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*” The Lord told Peter that he was to use his sifting experience to strengthen his brothers. The word “strengthen” is our word “confirm.” He was to use his testimony to help his brothers become more stable in their faith. This is how God works in our lives. He confirms us so that our faith is firm.

**GOD WILL STRENGTHEN YOU.** The word translated “*strengthen*” is only used here. It simply means to give strength or to make strong. As you are suffering, God will give you strength as strength is needed. You may not necessarily feel strong. But that’s a good thing. The weaker you feel the more you will lean on God. In **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**, the Lord says, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” God will give you strength as strength is needed.

- **God will give you strength to live obediently.**
- **God will give you strength to serve faithfully.**
- **God will give you strength to love unconditionally.**
- **God will give you strength to endure patiently.**
- **God will give you strength to pray unceasingly.**

**GOD WILL ESTABLISH YOU.** The word “*establish*” is similar in meaning to the word “confirm.” Confirm means to provide support. But “*establish*” means to lay a foundation. Confirm is what you put around it to keep it stable. But foundation is what you put under it to hold it up. It is the word used in THE PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS in **Matthew 7:25** where Jesus says, “*And the rain fell, and the floods came,*



*and the winds blew and beat on the house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.*" God will place you on a firm foundation so that your faith can stand when the storms of life are raging.

No wonder Peter moves immediately from benediction to doxology. Verse 11 says: *"To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen."* The word *"dominion"* is manifested power. It is not merely the exercise of power. It is the presence, significance, and dominance of strength. Peter uses the word here to say that we should not only praise God for what he has done, but we should also praise him for what he can and will do. He will restore us. He will confirm us. He will strengthen us. He will establish us. We should praise God for his dominion forever and ever. If this is so it means that no matter what is going on in your life right now you should praise God for the fact that he has the power to work it out. Praise God!