

RESILIENT HOPE // Waiting & Watching

Resilience: The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Hope: A confident expectation for a specific result.

Over the last several months, we've been going through Peter's letter to the early church who was facing tremendous hardship. Peter is pointing them and us to the return of Christ as the reason for our hope, as the source of our resilience, our buoyancy, our unwillingness to stay down no matter the current sufferings and circumstances of life. These verses are not just about how to endure, or barely make it through, or just survive, but how to THRIVE in the midst unbelievably difficult circumstances. This passage is about how to survive and thrive in a hostile environment; how to overcome in a hostile world.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to just make it through, I don't want to just survive difficulties. I don't just want to barely make it through. I want to look back at the hardest seasons of life and know I didn't just settle for status quo, barely scraping by, but overcame and advanced the kingdom even in the midst of hardship and difficulty.

1 Peter 5:1-11, "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **2** 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; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- Elders, Pastors, clergy... we are under shepherds of the chief shepherd. We will answer one day for how we led and cared for and shepherded God's people. One day, if we're faithful, leading by example, not domineering, but humbly, eagerly serving the flock of God, elders and shepherds will receive an unfading crown of glory from Jesus Himself.

5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' **6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. **8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around

like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

WAITING ON THE LORD

Waiting on God is a normal part of the Christian life. Every word in these verses points to what to do when you're in a situation you really don't like, and you want God to change.

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you,

¹⁰ 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.

How long is a little while? Don't know. When is the proper time? Don't know. In fact, that's the hardest part of waiting – not knowing! We don't know how long we'll have to wait. We don't know how long “a little while is.”

Enduring difficulties is much easier if there is an end in sight. Anyone can endure almost anything if they can see the finish line. What is far more difficult is when you don't know when the difficulty will end.

When you read the prophets and Psalms of the Old Testament, it's so interesting how much of their lives are spent in a posture of waiting. The prophet Jeremiah, who spent many years unjustly imprisoned in a dungeon, has a whole book called Lamentations where he cries out, “Why God? Where are you?” Throughout the Psalms, King David says things like, “I'm in a pit. My enemies have overwhelmed me. My friends have betrayed me. Darkness is my only friend. Why do you feel so far from me, God?” Before God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Israel waited for 400 years in slavery. That's 150 years longer than the U.S. has been a country! They're just going, “God, where are you?” Then, between the words of the last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the coming of the Messiah, the birth of Christ in Matthew, Israel waited for another 400 years of silence from God! Going, “God, where are

you?" Joseph sat in prison for years waiting on God. Or, Job, who waited for years before God restored his family and fortunes to him. And here in 1 Peter, Peter expects us to have moments like this as well, where we're just waiting on God to come through, to show up, to right some wrong, to ease our pain, to give us some light at the end of the tunnel.

The prophet Jeremiah said it this way: **Lamentations 3:26**, "It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

"Why?" While we don't know all the answers to that, we do know there are things you learn in a time of waiting that you cannot learn any other way.

In *Waiting on God*, Andrew Murray called waiting "*the most essential part of the Christian life;*" "*the highest expression of salvation;*" the "*only true expression of Christianity.*"

The day after Thanksgiving, my niece passed away from a drug overdose. Last weekend, we had visitation and the funeral, and everyone in the room is asking on some level, "God where are you?"

Where are you waiting right now on the goodness of God? Maybe you've lost a loved one and you're wondering how long the grief is going to hold on? You're wondering when life will get back to normal. When are things going to feel okay again? Jeremiah tells us that those who wait on the Lord will not be put to shame. He is near to the broken hearted. Maybe you have a child you want to see come back to God, and you've been praying and waiting. Maybe you're being slandered at work and are waiting for some semblance of justice. Or you're being treated unfairly by a spouse or a family member. Or facing the burden of financial stress during the holidays. Or you've been praying for your neighbors and wondering how long until God reveals Himself to them.

Continue to wait on the Lord... be patient.

Peter promises us...

10 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.

You're not alone. And you will not be put to shame. We can cling to the words of King David, "But I am convinced that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" (Psalm 27:13)

WATCHING FOR THE LION

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Pastor and Elder Dave Buehring did a fantastic job last week covering the tactics of the enemy, because we need to be reminded that there is an enemy in this world whose singular aim is to kill, steal, and destroy everything that God wants to do in you, and for you, and through your life. He wants to destroy the church. He wants to destroy relationships. If you're not a follower of Jesus, he wants to keep you from Jesus. If you are a follower of Jesus, he wants to destroy your witness to the world.

In *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, Lewis says that Christians make two primary mistakes in regard to Satan. Some people give Satan too much credit. Every flat tire is caused by a demon. The printer isn't working, it's a demon. Any sin in their life, that's Satan. "Satan got me fired." "Satan made me sleep in." On the other side, and perhaps even more problematic, are those who don't recognize him at all.

In the book of Job, Satan is the one that causes Job's financial issues, family strife, health problems. Some of these things you're dealing with are from Satan. Honestly, I can see him at work in how much he's attacked marriages and families in this season. Make no mistake about it, he wants your complete destruction.

The word "sober" meant then what it means today. It meant don't be drunk. It's the third time Peter uses the word in this book. That's not accidental. In stress and hard times, many of us escape our problems through alcohol. By numbing the pain or the hardship. Peter says to be watchful, be sober-minded. There's an enemy at work, and he wants to rob you of the good things God wants to do in you, even in hardship.

1 Peter 5:8-9, "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him..."

James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The point is that you don't need to fear him, but you also shouldn't ignore him. You have to resist him, and not with the weapons of the flesh, or your personality, or human wisdom. Not on your own willpower or resolve, which is tremendously limited. You need the weapons of the Spirit: Be frequent in prayer. Stay close to God. Repent and confess your sin to one another often. Memorize God's word. Keep faithfully doing the right thing. Another key part of resisting the devil is by refusing to isolate.

Peter writes this letter to a community of believers. Lions will go after prey that is separated and isolated from the herd. My aunt has a great phrase – a banana that gets separated from the bunch gets peeled and eaten! Don't isolate! Get in community with other believers that will fight along with you, who know you, and love you for you, and will watch your back.

THE WAY OF THE LAMB

Remember the context of this passage is about waiting, persevering, enduring, standing firm in hardship, in uncertainty. Many of us in these circumstances don't want to wait patiently. We want to take control. We want to take things into our own hands and force an outcome, and in our arrogance, we think we know what ought to be, what ought to happen. That somehow, we know better than the Lord. We all do this! We all have moments in the waiting where we think we know better than the Lord. Which is why we get impatient, why we get discouraged and fall into despair because the Lord isn't doing what we think He should do.

This is why Peter instructs us church, "in the waiting!"

1 Peter 5:6,10, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you... ¹⁰ 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."

None of us wait on God perfectly. We all get impatient. We think we know, and we take things into our own hands or try to force an outcome, or we fall into discouragement, or despair at times. But you know there's one who never got

impatient... who was a man of sorrows but never despaired. There's only one person in human history who waited on His Heavenly Father perfectly in hardship.

Philippians 2:5-11, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Peter is instructing us in hardship, in difficulty, to follow the example of Christ. To see that He humbled Himself in suffering, and He's the one who gives us the power to humble ourselves in suffering and hardship knowing that in time, if we humble ourselves, God will be the one to restore, confirm, strengthen and establish us.

Maybe you need God to help you in the waiting. Maybe you need to God to help you cast all your anxieties on Him, and humble yourself, and trust in His timing, allowing Him to strengthen you for the days ahead. Jesus tells us that faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains.

As Jesus hung on that cross 2,000 years ago, a thief hung next to him. And in his last moments, the thief looked to Jesus and said, "*Rabbi, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*"

He didn't pray the sinner's prayer or recite the apostles' creed. He wasn't baptized into the faith. He just said, "*Jesus, remember me.*" You know what Jesus said in response? "*Today, you'll be with me in paradise.*"

Humble yourself. Give your whole life to Jesus! Surrender everything to Him, trust Him, know Him, love Him and allow yourself to be known and loved by Him. Invite Jesus into your life. Look to Him for your salvation.

Because Jesus Christ alone laid down His life. He gave everything for you and me so that you might know His love for you. And Christ alone is the One who gives us the strength to endure the waiting and the deepest pains and sorrows of life. Because the promise of the gospel, and the continual reminder of Peter's letter to those who are

suffering is this: One day, Jesus Christ is coming back. And He is going to right every wrong, He will deal the final blow to sin, He will make every sad thing come untrue, He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And because of that hope, we won't just merely endure, or survive, or barely make it through, but because of the hope of Christ, we can thrive in the waiting.

I want to invite you to close your eyes for a moment. The Lord sees you. And He's for you. And while we don't know the outcome of whatever it is we're hoping for, we do know this...

Psalm 25:3, "Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame..."

Maybe you just need to come to Jesus today. Maybe for the first time or maybe to come back to Jesus after wandering away for a season. Maybe you need to humble yourself, and give your heart to Christ, and allow Him to give you hope for something more, something better, something of meaning and substance and life.

Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Maybe you've been waiting for a season or a decade for God to come through for you. God has brought you to this moment, He's drawing near to you right now. Let Him know that you need Him. The Lord sees you. He loves you. He is so unbelievably for you. He's bringing salvation today.