

**Lesson: 1 Peter 4:12–17, 5:6–11**

<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. <sup>17</sup> For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ... <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. <sup>10</sup> And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. <sup>11</sup> To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, your Son our Savior was taken up in glory and intercedes for us at your right hand. Through your living and abiding Word, give us hearts to know him and faith to follow where he has gone; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia. (John 14:18)

**Sermon Text:**

Let's play a little game of "do you know who this is?" He was a Harvard dropout. He co-owned a little software company that was a complete failure that was called Traf-O-Data. By His own admission in the early years, He was a complete failure. He would later say, *"It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure."* Got it all figured out? It's Bill Gates who because of what he was able to accomplish with Microsoft at age 31 was the world's youngest self-made billionaire.

Want another one? He couldn't speak fluently until the age of nine. A rather rebellious nature got him expelled from school. He was refused admittance into tech school when he applied. He would later say, *"Success is failure in progress."* Think you have him pegged yet? Albert Einstein won the Nobel Peace Prize in Physics in 1921 and is widely considered one of the foremost geniuses of history.

One last one because it's a sermon and not a game show, right? He was the owner of a failing business which five years later led to a complete nervous breakdown. His first attempt at leadership would lead to complete rejection. Big hint coming. He would eventually be murdered by his enemies. All Set? Abraham Lincoln, our nation's 16<sup>th</sup> President, would offer this advice, *"My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure."*

Have you picked up on the pattern among our examples? Each person knew their fair share of failure before they tasted of the success they are most known for. In the examples, their passion, love, their drive for earthy success kept them moving forward. Dear friends, today Peter picks up the cross of Christianity, the suffering we endure as we follow after Jesus and tells us that as we focus on gifts and promises purchased and won by Christ, well **GLORY OFTEN LEADS THROUGH THE GRIME.**

Our previous examples would all tell you that failure or adversity is to be expected in life. In fact, given their quotes, one might say it is a requirement for success. Peter begins with a similar understanding of the Christian Cross, <sup>12</sup> *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.* <sup>13</sup> *But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.* <sup>14</sup> *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.* It should not be surprising to see that Christianity

comes with suffering and persecution, a certain amount of sacrifice, even pain. In fact, Paul says, we will welcome it, even rejoice in it. He learned this from Jesus who once said, <sup>18</sup> *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."* <sup>19</sup> *If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."* <sup>20</sup> *Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. (John 15:18-20)"* It is because of sections like this in the Bible that many a theologian has said, "no cross, no Christian." If I am not suffering, then maybe it's because my faith is failing. Perhaps I am not living in, for, and of Christ as much as I am living in, for, and of the world. It's a question every Christian should ponder before we close our eyes at night and when we wake in the morning.

But, lest we all go out and decide to be Jerks for Jesus so that the suffering increases and we can claim the world persecutes us just like it persecuted Jesus, Peter offers another truth of Christian cross-bearing. <sup>15</sup> *If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.* <sup>16</sup> *However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.* Ready for the second truth of Christian cross-bearing. The Christian never picks the cross. The cross comes to the Christian.

Then come words which are a little scary. Well, okay, scarier than previous words which promised suffering. <sup>17</sup> *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?* Judgment is always a frightening concept for the sinful human being. But I would dare say that when the subject of cross-bearing weighs upon the heart and mind of a Christian judgment may be scarier still.

Why? Because I don't want to carry crosses! Who does?! I don't know a single person who is think, "Oh, goodie, another glorious day to endure shame and ridicule for my faith. Can't wait!!" I'm sure that there wasn't a single martyr, Peter included who thought, "Oh glorious day, I get to die for Christ." But there are historic accounts from the coliseums of Rome of Christians, who instead of screaming and descending into panic-stricken fear in their final moments knelt and prayed. In fact, history is replete as is our modern day unfortunately with stories, histories, of Christians who endured far greater than I could ever imagine and let their faith shine brightly in the process. How?

Because they believed these words, <sup>6</sup> *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.* <sup>7</sup> *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* <sup>8</sup> *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* <sup>9</sup> *Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* <sup>10</sup> *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

Ready for another truth of cross-bearing? Our crosses never earn us a thing. Jesus' cross earns us everything! Brothers and sisters, it is only when we lift our eyes from the fleeting fancies of the world around us, it is only when we look past ourselves and the ease that we crave, it is only when we lift our eyes to the cross of Christ that we see the love of God for us. So I humble myself to His mighty will knowing that in all things He works for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). I can cast all my angst and anxiety on Him knowing that thought it may not disappear in this world I have a God who helps me every step of the way through the crosses I carry until the day when He removes them forever in heaven. Though satan may prowl around looking to devour me, Jesus has already defeated him and therefore even I can resist him. My fellow Christians all over the world are joining in the fight and even when we falter and fail, God will bring us to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus. Because of His Cross and not our own, *God will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

My dear friends, I'm not sure what you have had to endure this week. I don't know what is on the horizon in the week to come. I pray it will not be a cross though it would seem they are always there, whether large or small. As we endure scorn, ridicule, or worse, for Him remember a lesson bigger than anything Lincoln, Einstein, or Gates could give us. For the Christian **GLORY OFTEN LEADS THROUGH THE GRIME.** And because it does, God stands with you every step of the way. *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* <sup>11</sup> *To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.*