



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Help! God's Hope for the Hurting

1 Peter 5:5–10

Tim Badal | June 6, 2021



Turn in your Bibles this morning to the book of 1 Peter. We'll be in chapter five, as we begin a new series, one that's a bit somber and personal. We're

going to be asking the Lord for help. According to the Mental Health America website, the mental and emotional struggles of Americans are skyrocketing. That's true for both non-believers and those who believe in Christ and the work He's done. Studies show that feelings of anxiety, depression and all kinds of other internal struggles have gripped more and more Americans. The recent pandemic has only served to exacerbate this crisis. As a result, more and more people are turning to medication, counseling and anything else that will take away the anguish, anger, anxiety and apathy that now plagues our society as a whole.

While God has been gracious to give us so many ways to address these maladies, often we who are Christ followers forget the most important source of help: the Word of God. I love God's Word, especially its transparency about people who have been faithful. These are the men and women we want to emulate in our walk with God. But many times in Scripture the writers themselves tell us of their internal struggles and anguish. Some of the most honest words ever written are found in the pages of Scripture. So over these next eight weeks we'll see that many of the things that we're bothered by, the things we struggle with, are the very things people in the days of the Scriptures also struggled with which is why we will turn to the Wonderful Counselor to get the help and hope we need.

Today we're going to 1 Peter 5. The whole letter was written to a group of Christians who were suffering. The key reason for their suffering was persecution while living in a world that was very hostile to Christianity. However the suffering I want to talk about is not suffering that comes from the outside. Instead, I want to look at the suffering that comes from within—the anxiety, anguish and anger many of us experience. These things come when we feel we're at our wits' end and there's nowhere to turn. So I want to take today's passage, which speaks of suffering caused by persecution, and see it as a remedy for all kinds of suffering.

Let's face it. In one sense many kinds of suffering are the same. We're hurting, so we want our pain to stop. I believe that the solutions to persecution also offer ways by which we can deal with our own internal struggles. We'll be reading 1 Peter 5:5b-11, after which I want to glean a handful of truths from this that I hope will help us realize how we can cry out to our God when we face any sort of trials. Let's look at our text now.

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.

The word "help" is the first word all of us utter. I saw this three times as each of my boys was born. The first cry into the world was "Help!" They didn't use that word exactly, but we knew what they were saying. "Help! I don't know where I am. Help! I'm hungry. Help! I'm scared. Help! I don't know what's going on." Let's face it. For the first two years of life, it's "Help!" all the time, right? Then as they get older, they require less and less help. When they get to be teenagers, they never use that word—unless it's too late and

it's already cost a lot of money. But as we get older, we cry that less and less often. There's something in our culture that says, "Mature people don't ask for help."

Peter however is telling us that as Christ followers, crying out for help is exactly what we need to be doing. As countercultural as that may be, if we want to be a vibrant and healthy follower of Jesus Christ, we must get into the habit of crying out for help. After all, that's exactly how we got into the Christian faith in the first place. You see, without the help of Christ, we are totally lost. The first words we must utter as new believers is "Help! Jesus, help me. I'm a sinner in need of salvation."

why would we stop there? In the process of sanctification, why do we think we no longer need help from God? The Bible tells us we need Christ daily. But how do we get into the practice of crying out for help, both to God and also to others around us?

Hope is found by surrendering our status.

The first step to getting help is to surrender our status. Notice that there is a recurring theme in our text. He says in verse five, "*Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'*" Then in verse six we read, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.*" Three times in one and half verses Peter is saying, "I want you to understand humility."

What is this humility? In English, the word implies that we are to push ourselves down, but that's not what this word means in the Greek. To them, humility is a two-way street. It literally means "to bring back to ground level." One of these two aspects we understand. I would describe it as being brought from the penthouse down to ground level. We have an elevated view of ourselves, we're arrogant about who we are and need to lower ourselves from the top floor back to where we really belong—in the lobby. True humility takes us back to ground level. Have you ever thought about it that way? We sometimes describe it this way: not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less. We are to go from where we think we are to where God sees us.

There's a second aspect to humbling that we don't usually think about which is to go against a false sense of humility. It's possible also to have too low of a view of ourselves. We can think of it in terms of coming down from the penthouse, but sometimes it involves coming from up from the basement. Some of us believe things about ourselves that are untrue, therefore we're living in bondage we don't need to have.

Peter wants us to come to the place where we actually belong. Humility can therefore be understood as seeing ourselves as God sees us. We tend to see ourselves either as being higher than where God wants us to be, or else lower than where He wants us to be. Sometimes this wrong view comes from the way other people see us, as being higher or lower than we are. But humility seeks to bring us to the place where we think about ourselves the same way God does.

Peter gives us two aspects of humility to consider. First, he uses a word that is in the aorist imperative tense. Essentially he's saying, "You need to be humble now. Not tomorrow, not next week. Don't put this on your New Year's resolution list for 2022. This needs to be addressed now. Get humble right now." Okay, then, what do we have to do?

Another thing Peter is doing here is using the passive voice which means that we cannot actually humble ourselves on our own. We need someone to bring humility to us. Notice in verse five how Peter says, "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*" So it's not up to us to figure out how to be humble on our own, for that would bring its own kind of arrogance. We need to tell God, "Lord, I need something I can't do on my own. I need You to bring me humility, whether I'm in the basement or the penthouse. I'm asking You to be the elevator operator in my life and bring me back to ground level."

One of the reasons we can't get help with our many maladies is because we try to do this entirely on our own. Until we give these things to God, nothing will change. A humble individual says, "I'm just like every other human being. I'm not better than anybody else; I'm not worse than anybody else. But I do have real struggles."

The Bible tells us this is the normal human condition. There are physical struggles, spiritual struggles, mental and emotional struggles and all of them have to do with the sin inside us and around us. The most faithful people have struggles; the most sinful people also have struggles. Suffering is the human condition. Humility admits, "I have real struggles and I need You, God, because You are the only answer to them."

Hope is found by casting our cares on Him.

So the only way we can do what we're being asked to do in verse seven is through humility. *"Casting all your anxieties, because he cares for you."* We'll never cast our concerns and struggles on to God if we are not humble. A person at ground level realizes, "I am lost without God, so I'm going to throw my concerns on Him, because He cares for me."

Why can we do this? Because God has a mighty hand that can carry them. When we humble ourselves, we see that we're not as big as we thought we were—but God is. Or if we're in the basement, we don't think our problems are so big that God cannot handle them. Peter tells us not only that God can take care of these things, but also that God is inviting us to throw them on Himself.

The word "cast" is important. When we hear this word, we think of a fisherman with a rod, casting out his line to catch a fish. It's just a snap of the wrist. Many of us tend to do this kind of casting with our cares. We give our little concerns to God, the smaller details of our lives. But Peter means something more when he uses the word cast.

Peter was a fisherman, so for him, casting meant the kind of fishing he did. He would use nets with rocks attached to the edges. They were heavy. It took all his strength to pick up those nets and cast them out into the water in order to harvest a number of fish. This is the sort of casting he's referring to.

We also see this word used in the Gospels. On Palm Sunday, Jesus told His disciples to get a certain donkey for Him to ride. After they brought the donkey, it says they took their cloaks and "cast" them on the donkey. In other words, they took what they were wearing and they put it on something else. This is what God wants us to do with our struggles, our setbacks and whatever is plaguing us today. If we want help, the first step toward a solution is for us to throw, to hurl, our problems and situations on Him, because He cares about us.

Let me give you a modern illustration of this. Every Monday at the Badal house, a man comes by our driveway in a big green truck. He takes all the trash we've put out on the curb and hurls it into his truck. I'm very thankful for the job he does. As we watch our garbage men do what they do, I want you to think of two things.

Our problems and struggles are like garbage. We can hold on to them for a little while, but in a Chicagoland summer, how long do you want your garbage to stay around? It gets smelly and gross. Likewise, the longer you hold on to your problems, the more they will increase. The worst thing we can do is hold on to them. Try holding on to your garbage for a week. When the garbage man drives by, you wave and say, "Good to see you! No garbage this week." Then two weeks later, look into that garbage can. You'll see maggots and smell things you can't imagine. Talk about a beautiful picture on a Sunday morning.

In that moment, when you hold on to your problems instead of giving them to God, that's what is happening in your life. God wants us to give our problems to Him so He can dispense of them in the proper place. Some of us right now are holding on to our stuff and not giving it to God. Then not only do we have the original problem, but we have new smells and maggots and all the issues that come with holding on to the stuff of life when we shouldn't. God is the divine dealer with our stuff. He knows where to take it and how to address it. He's telling us, "Cast these things on to Me. Hurl it to Me. Don't hold on to it. Give it to Me."

Some of us have problems that are far bigger than they need to be, not because the circumstances are big, but because we have compounded the problems by holding on to them. God cares for us, so by His grace He's asking us to give our struggles to Him. He's telling us, "I'm strong enough and am equipped to address everything that concerns you."

Hope is found by trusting His timing.

In order to do this, we also have to trust God's timing. Peter says in verse six, *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."*

On Sunday night, the Badals are feverishly getting all the garbage out to the curb. Why? Because I'm not a morning person and Mr. Garbage Man comes awfully early in the morning. I don't want to miss him.

God says, "If you're going to give Me your problems, you need to trust that I will deal with them at the right time." This is hard for us to do. We sometimes cast our concerns on God with a caveat. "God, here are my concerns. If You can have them addressed by Monday at 7:00 a.m. that would be great." But God is the One Who decides what the "proper time" is.

When it comes to God and time, He usually does not do things on our time; He works on His time. And listen, God's timing is always longer than ours. Peter tells us this in 2 Peter 3:8: *"With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."* That means that just because we cry out today doesn't mean our problem will be gone tomorrow. In fact, Peter specifically tells us this in verse ten: *"And after you have suffered a little while..."*

He then goes on to tell us what a "little while" can look like: *"...the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory..."* This means a "little while" needs to be seen in comparison to eternity. It isn't measured in days, weeks, months, years or even decades. It's little from the perspective of an infinite eternity. God's timing may mean that our problem doesn't leave us tomorrow, next month, next year or even in the next decade. We may have it for the rest of our lives. One of the reasons God allows us to suffer is so eternity will be so much sweeter.

Maybe our situations will cause us to focus on how wonderful eternity will be, in that place where there will be no more tears or pain or sorrows (Revelation 21:4). The old will be gone and the new will come (1 Corinthians 5:17). Maybe God allows us to have setbacks that last a lifetime so we will stay close to Him. God knows that if our lives are problem free, we can become vulnerable to pride. He uses our struggles to bring us down to ground level, so we'll define ourselves on His terms, not our own. Maybe God has allowed suffering in our lives because He chooses to for reasons we can't understand. When this happens, God also provides the grace we need to endure them, as long as we come to Him in humility.

Then, in the "proper time," we're told that He will also exalt us. Remember the elevator illustration? He wants to bring us down to ground level, but there will also be a time in the future when He will exalt us—in His time, in His way and according to His standards. So our prayer must go like this: "God, I don't know when You're going to bring me help, but I'm going to trust You. I'm going to be positioned to receive what You give me." We might want to stop at verse seven: *"Casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you..."* and close in prayer. That's nice, but Peter goes on in verse eight: *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

As if you and I need any more problems. We've got our struggles and anxieties to deal with; now those are compounded by an enemy who wants to hurt us. The word "adversary" literally means one who prosecutes against you. Here you are, dealing with your challenges, and now you have someone who's mocking you, bringing your problems up to you at the worst possible times.

We know we have issues, but how much worse does it get when someone else comes at us with added accusations. "A Christian shouldn't be dealing with these things. If you really are the Christian you think you are, you wouldn't have anger. You wouldn't be at your wits' end. You wouldn't deal with anxiety. What kind of Christian are you?"

Ongoing ridicule and accusations can make our trials even harder. Peter says our adversary is prowling around—present tense—and he's roaring like a lion. He's trying to scare us with his presence and discourage us with his words. Maybe we can't see the lion, but we can hear him and we know he's nearby. It can be frightening. When this happens, Peter is telling us we need to brace for the battle. How do we do this? How do we deal with this enemy who is going about, not only roaring but actually seeking to devour us. Maybe that's how you feel today. Maybe you feel swallowed up by your circumstances and by the devil. What does Peter tell us to do?

Hope is found by bracing for the battle.

First, we need to be sober-minded and watchful. Bracing for battle starts in our minds. If our mind is in a state of humility—if we're at the ground level where God defines us—that's the place where the battle needs to be engaged. We can't let the world define us. We can't even define ourselves. When we center our attention on the truths that God declares about us, that's when we're in the lobby and where we can best do battle. Sober-mindedness lets us see ourselves, our struggles and our setbacks as God sees them.

So when we find ourselves caught up with anger or anxiety or depression, God wants us to think about who He says we are: "You're My child. You were bought with a price. I love you and have called you into a relationship with Me. I have given you My Son and My Holy Spirit. Because of this, I will protect and care for you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will do all of this according to My promises." He does these things, not because we're so great, but because He has chosen to love us.

For this reason, we need to understand that nothing in our lives will devour us or take us captive, because He is with us. No weapon formed against us will prosper (Isaiah 54:17). Rather, we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37) and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39).

Thus, no matter what form our struggles take, we are to consider them to be joy (James 1:2). If we live at ground level, where God is, we can brace ourselves for battle by being watchful and sober-minded. Peter then goes on in verse nine to tell us that the way to resist our enemy is to be firm in our faith. So it's our faith in God and what He does that will get us through the storm.

Then at the end of verse nine, Peter brings up a truth we should never forget: we're not the only ones in this fight. We're not the only ones with struggles. One of the ways the devil beats us up is telling us we're the only ones dealing with this issue. We're the only one who is anxious, the only one who is sinking deeper and deeper into depression, we're the only one who loses our temper and falls into sin. But Peter reminds us that *"the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."* That's why every believer needs help. We all need a Savior.

Hope is found by carrying out our calling.

Peter goes on to tell us that in order for this to happen, we need to carry out our calling. After the dark storm clouds of the devil and his attacks in verses eight and nine, the sun rises in verse ten: *"And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace..."* Literally this means a multi-faceted grace, the grace we need. The multi-purpose grace of God will minister to us. This is the God *"who has called you."* Amidst all our setbacks, dysfunctions, anxieties and adversities, God has called us personally. So let me show you some important truths from verses 10-11 that I want you to take with you.

First, *"After you have suffered a little while..."* All suffering will one day come to an end. It may seem long to us, but God says it's only going to be a little while. While our suffering is temporal, God's glory is eternal. God's solution to our sufferings will be done in His time, in His way, and in Christ Jesus.

Your position in Him is unshakeable. In the middle of everything you're dealing with, *"Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."* Those four words state that whatever you may be facing, God has it covered. He's got it taken care of.

Finally, God's reign is unstoppable. You are unshakeable in your position because His dominion is *"forever and ever"* (verse 11). As difficult as today's sufferings may be for us, as heartbreaking as they are, God is with us and He has all these things covered. More importantly, He has us covered. We need to rest in that truth. In the meantime, between now and the day when all struggles, pains and sorrows will be over, what are we to do? We cry out to our God and ask Him for help. He promises that when we throw our concerns, cares and fears on Him, He will take them, because He cares for us.

As we move to a time of communion, consider this a reminder that God has already addressed our greatest need for help when He purchased our salvation. Every month we take time to remember the help Jesus brought us on the cross. Our sin was the greatest problem we've ever faced. It was a problem we could never address on our own, but Jesus took care of it for us. He gave us what we could never get on our own—the rescue we need. So if God can provide salvation for us, how much more can He take care of the momentary struggles we find ourselves facing today?

As we prepare for communion, I want you to take a couple moments to thank the Lord for saving you. Then consider what struggles or problems beyond sin you need help with today. Tell the Lord, "Just as You addressed my sin problem, would You address these things in my life as well?" We know that His timing may be different than ours, but He still longs for us to cast our concerns on Him. So let's thank Him for our salvation, then ask Him for help amidst the struggles we find ourselves facing today.