

The Victorious Cross-Bearer.

Text: 1 Peter 5:6-11

Suggested Hymns:

340, 416, 426, 352, 205

- 1) He humbles himself under the mighty hand of God.
- 2) He casts all cares upon God.
- 3) He is sober and vigilant.
- 4) He keeps the eye of faith fixed on Jesus and eternal glory.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Peter 5:6-11, *⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. ¹¹ To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

St. Paul, speaking for himself and his brethren in the faith, declares in Acts 14:22, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”* Here Paul voices one of the many truths of Holy Scripture, which are incomprehensible to the natural mind and all too often a baffling mystery to the very elect of God.

Human reason argues, *“God’s children are God’s favourites.”* He who believes in Jesus and His Gospel and receives the Sacrament of Holy Baptism shall be saved. The believer’s sins, according to God’s Word, are taken away, the sinner is reconciled to God, every enemy is overcome, he enjoys every

privilege and blessing of God's house, and after death he will receive an inheritance incorruptible.

What, then, is more reasonable than to assume that the godly must bask in the sunshine of material prosperity and perpetual happiness?

As usual, flesh and blood are mistaken in their deductions. God's Word and Christian experience teach the very opposite. We read in Psalm 92:7 that *the wicked spring up like grass, And ... the workers of iniquity flourish.* Meanwhile God's children "*must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.*" And Jesus, confirming this paradox, asks every disciple of His to take up his cross and follow Him.

The way of the cross is the road that God's saints have always trod. The lives of patriarchs, apostles, and evangelists recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, the experience of God's children of all ages and every country, confirm the testimony of St. Paul.

In this present time, suffering for the name of Jesus and His holy Gospel are and always will be, until the final day of deliverance, the portion of God's elect.

However, with the cross, God also gives us the words which convey the strength of soul to bear it. Such words the Christian cross-bearer finds in our text. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Victorious Cross-Bearer Humbles Himself Under The Mighty Hand Of God.

Our text reminds God's children not only of the fact that the cross must be borne, but distinctly emphasises how Christians should bear their burden.

Is it not true that some followers of Jesus, when bearing their cross, do so under protest? The cross is painful and offensive to the flesh. In moments of weakness even the best of Christians have been known to be impatient. But impatience and murmuring make the cross all the heavier and jeopardise our safety.

Our text says, *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.* It is the hand of our Father who fashions the pattern of our lives. He is our loving Father through Christ, in whom we believe, and He never changes. Whether He sends joys or sorrows, He never

makes a mistake. His judgments may be unsearchable and His ways past finding out, yet His thoughts are thoughts of peace and love toward His redeemed.

Therefore, dear cross-bearer, humble yourself under the mighty hand of your covenant God. Christian humility is a precious fruit of Christian faith. Not self-will, but God's will is the safest and best. Scripture gives us many examples.

For example, Jesus in Gethsemane prayed *not My will, but Yours, be done.*¹ Job said, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there."*² *The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.*³ And the leper, mentioned in Matthew 8:2 came and worshiped Jesus, *saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."*

Humble submission to God's will and dispensations, is the first lesson Christian cross-bearers should learn. Only that faith which shoulders the burdens of discipleship in the spirit of Jesus Christ and says, *"Thy will be done,"* has the promise.

This is expressed in the words of the hymnist,⁴

*Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.*

2. The Victorious Cross-Bearer Casts All Cares Upon God.

In order to strengthen God's children for their God-given task, our text goes on to say, *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.* That is the wonderful process by which untold numbers have conquered while bearing heavy burdens.

A fatal mistake for a Christian to make is to imagine that he must bear his burdens alone. Cares then spring up in the heart and soon draw their deep furrows across the brow. A Christian father is out of work; the family purse is empty; and the children are crying for bread. Another family has a wayward child, whose misconduct threatens to crush the heart of his God-fearing parents. The thought is then ready at hand: Can you blame such a parent for worrying?

Indeed, cares and worries would be quite in place if God's child stood alone and there were none greater to share the burden. But for these very trying times

God's Word calls to the cross-bearer, *casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

Unbelief and doubt is the prolific mother of worries and cares. Faith, on the other hand, casts out cares by taking God's hand and in child-like confidence trusting that our heavenly Father will solve the most perplexing problems for His dear children.

And do you wish to know how to cast your cares upon Him? Jesus says in John 16:23, *Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.* Approach the throne of grace and plead in faith with your heavenly Father to remove the cup of tribulation according to the good pleasure of His will. No plea of faith has ever been made in vain.

When Sennacherib's army was entrenched against Jerusalem to crush God's people, King Hezekiah cast all his cares upon his Lord. The king's prayer of faith conquered the mighty army of the East.

When Jesus' disciples were tossed about in the storm, when death stared them in the face and according to human reckoning there was no escape, they cast their care upon their master, crying, *"Lord, save us, we perish."* Did their Master fail them? No.

Take heart, Christian cross-bearer, and anchor your faith in the promises of your Lord.

The hymnist writes,⁵

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged;

Take it to the Lord in prayer.

3. The Victorious Cross-Bearer Is Sober And Vigilant.

The apostle next sounds a note of warning to all Christian cross-bearers. He calls attention to a danger which has proved disastrous to the heedless. In verses 8 and 9 Christians are warned against the cunning of the devil, the arch-enemy of God and man. Like a vicious beast of the jungle, bent on destruction, the devil seeks the physical, moral, and spiritual destruction of God's children. The pages of history bear out the warning of God's Word.

The favourite strategy of satan is to attack a Christian with his fiery and death-dealing darts when he is bearing a cross. Seldom does Satan attack an entire congregation or a synod. When God, our heavenly Father, seems to hide His face and the Christian feels forsaken, the Tempter approaches him to do his worst.

This opportunity he sought in the wilderness when tempting the Son of God. When Job, the great cross-bearer of the Old Testament, was reduced to pitiful isolation and misery, Satan made his strategic attack to rock and shake his faith in divine providence and the love of God.

What tried Christian could not tell of similar experiences? When under the weight of tribulation, the devil will suggest doubt in the goodness of God. He will accuse the Lord with being unfair and advise the Christian to forsake the Lord and His promises, and His Church — for what? For the lies of the prince of hell.

Only that Christian who has passed through the fiery ordeal and test, and the buffetings of Satan knows how strong these appeals and arguments of the devil are. Woe unto that Christian who listens to the seductive lies of the Tempter! Such a road can lead only to an end like Judas.

Christians, be sober, be vigilant. Perpetual vigilance, watchfulness, soberness, are mandatory if we are to stand. However, such soberness is a gift of God, imparted through the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments. A Christian is strong and invincible in the conflict only so long as he wields the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. One little word can and will fell the devil.

And when Satan would have the Christian cross-bearer think that he stands alone, that God has forgotten him, then we are to spike that hell-born lie with the Word of God, which assures us that *“the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”*⁶

Cross-bearing is not an isolated experience, but the common experience of all soldiers of the Cross. All soldiers must endure hardships to win the victory. The thought, not only of the fellowship of the Gospel, but also of the fellowship of the cross, will hearten the cross-bearer to carry on in the strength of God, and to resist the devil steadfastly until the end, until victory is his.

The hymnist writes,⁷

*Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son.*

4. The Victorious Cross-Bearer Keeps The Eye Of Faith Fixed On Jesus And Eternal Glory.

Finally, the Christian cross-bearer keeps his eye fixed upon Jesus and the glory to come. Our text says, *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. " To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.*

For a Christian the prospects for the future are always as bright as the changeless promises of God. One of the greatest incentives to human effort is the prospect of a blessing. The scientist, the athlete, the artist, the philosopher, the statesman, the financier, the skilled worker, the inventor, the military leader and others are often fired to almost superhuman effort and sacrifice and tireless application to their great task that they might reach the pinnacle of achievement and win the prize.

And yet the rewards of human endeavour at their best are but transitory. Not so the blessings which God has promised to the faithful cross-bearing servant of Christ. Our faithful God promises to every true and faithful disciple the certain reward of grace — *“eternal glory.”*

Jesus promises us in John 12:26, *and where I am, there My servant will be also.* We read in Psalm 16:11, *“ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Anticipating this celestial reward of divine grace, St. Paul exclaims, *[I have] a desire to depart and to be with Christ.*⁸ This promise sustained Job in his great tribulations. When all earthly comfort had fled, his faith did not fail him, but he triumphantly said, *“I know that my Redeemer lives.”*⁹

And these promises of your Saviour will not fail you, dear cross-bearer. You may have misgivings when mindful of your own infirmities; but trust the promise of your Lord, *“I am with you always, even unto the end of the*

world,”¹⁰ and say with the man of God, Jacob, “*I will not let You go unless You bless me!*”¹¹

Our text says, *He will establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!*

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,¹²

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near;

He changeth not, and thou art dear;

Only believe, and thou shalt see

That Christ is all in all to thee. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 22:42

² i.e. naked I shall depart

³ Job 1:21

⁴ Hymn 416

⁵ Hymn 426

⁶ 1 Peter 5:9

⁷ Hymn 205

⁸ Philippians 1:23

⁹ Job 19:25

¹⁰ Matthew 28:20

¹¹ Genesis 32:26

¹² Hymn 352 v 4