

# Moving Forward with Eager Expectation of Glory

## 1 Peter 4:12-17;5:6-11 (Easter 7)

Dear friends, do not be surprised by the fiery trial that is happening among you to test you, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead rejoice whenever you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted in connection with the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or as a meddler. But if you suffer for being a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God in connection with this name. For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God. Now if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who disobey the gospel of God? Therefore humble yourselves under God's powerful hand so that he may lift you up at the appointed time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Have sound judgment. Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him by being firm in the faith. You know that the same kinds of sufferings are being laid on your brotherhood all over the world. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Growing up I loved to play the game of "Sorry". You draw cards which tell you how many spaces to move forward. So it takes a little bit of strategy to decide which peg to move each time. But when your opponent picks up a "Sorry Card", it usually is not a good thing for you. The instructions on that card say this: Must take one man from your start, place it on any square that is occupied by any opponent, and return that opponent's man to its start. What has been moving forward now isn't as it is forced to start over. "Sorry cards" prevent you from moving forward in the game. Instead you get further away from home.

Forty days after Jesus' resurrection, he ascended into heaven. We celebrated that on Thursday and we heard again today the account of the Ascension. Jesus' saving work is done. Through Jesus we have the solid hope of glory with him who sits in glory ruling over all things until he returns. So as we live our life, we are moving forward in faith toward our home of heaven. We are moving forward with an eager expectation of glory.

But just like in the game of Sorry, there are "sorry cards" in our life that seek to keep us from moving forward with that eager expectation of glory. They weigh on us and feel like heavy burdens upon our hearts. Glory seems so far away when they appear in our life making it difficult to eagerly expect glory. Our lives may not be the same, but they aren't necessarily too different in many ways than what it was like for the Christians to whom Peter was writing.

These Christians were suffering physical persecution for confessing Christ. They endured insults just for being connected to Jesus. Their pride must have been a constant temptation to rely on themselves. Anxiety, that unsettled feeling in the face of danger or problems, filled their mind. And if they weren't paying attention or staying alert, they were more vulnerable to the Devil's temptations. With all of this, it wouldn't be hard to feel as if they were alone in this world and that no one else could possibly be enduring the same suffering, the same anxieties, or the same temptations.

Moving forward with an eager expectation of glory would seem to be more difficult if not impossible when all that you see played in your life are those "sorry cards" which are just the opposite of glory. But Peter in the words of Scripture we focus our attention on today, addresses each one of those cards. He takes them from a different angle. Instead of looking at the cards played in front of us, we look to our Ascended Lord

Jesus who sits in glory. Confident in him who has won the victory for us, we are kept moving forward with a renewed eager expectation of glory which is far better than anything we experience in this world. It changes how we view those “sorry cards” played out in our life. We read. **(read vs. 12-13)**

At the time of his writing, there were many Christians suffering physical persecution for their faith. To some it may have caught them off guard. When something seems like a surprise, you can be shaken by what you never might have expected. Instead of being surprised and shaken because of this painful and hurtful persecution for their faith, Peter encourages God’s people to rejoice that they are suffering because they are followers of Christ. That sure doesn’t sound right. How can we find joy in suffering because of our faith?

Peter had heard Jesus say years before, **“If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. In fact whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:24-25)** Before the glory, comes the cross. It was that way for Jesus. It is that way for us too. If the ultimate goal of a Christian was a temporal one, one that was realized only in a person’s life here on earth, Christians would truly be foolish. If clinging to Christ in faith and then perhaps suffering physically for it would be our entire joy - with no hope of anything more than that - what sense would that make unless there was hope of glory. Jesus will come again just as he went up into heaven. He will appear in glory. When that day comes, there will be even greater joy because that is the end of the cross and the beginning of our glory which we eagerly longed for.

Yet that suffering might also be in the form of insults for being a Christian. It seems like there is a lot of negativity toward Christians today who have been longing to gather together once again as we are today. They see that desire as something not necessary and dangerous. In some circles we might even face some harsh insulting words that cut deep and make us wonder if all of this is worth it, but in answer to that Peter says that we are blessed despite the insults. **(read vs. 14-17)**

The name “Christian” was never given to Christians by Christians. It was given as an insult by the “powers that be” in the time of the early Church. It was meant to mock believers for whom they followed. Instead of being ashamed of being called this, Peter encourages them to consider themselves blessed and wear the name of Christ as a badge of honor. What was meant to insult, we embrace. Even though it isn’t meant today as an insult, we still praise God because of the name of Christ. We rejoice in what we have belonging to the victorious Jesus. We have glory that we eagerly expect and long for.

However sometimes what seems to keep us from moving forward with that eager expectation is not external forces, but what’s at work in our own hearts. **(read vs. 6-7)** Pride often leads us to think we can handle anything that comes our way on our own. Pride might even lead us to a sense of resentment or complaint when God allows such afflictions to come our way. Yet God allows those things to happen with a purpose in mind - to humble our sinful pride and lead us to an even deeper trust in him trusting his strength and not our own. We trust that he in mercy will lift us up giving us sufficient strength to bear whatever crosses have been placed upon us. Whether it is sooner or later, we trust that he will eventually lift us out of that pit of affliction completely to the glories of heaven at the time when he knows is best.

What about anxiety? Surely the Christians Peter first wrote to, humanly speaking, had plenty of cause for anxiety and worry. Today especially in light of all that is going on right now, we may have plenty of anxiety, that unsettled feeling filling our hearts. Yet what keeps us eagerly expecting glory is to take that anxiety and cast on God our Savior. Hand over every matter which causes anxiety to him, and let him take care of it for you in his wisdom and power. Why? Because he cares for you. God is concerned about what happens to you. He

is constantly thinking about our problems and anxieties. What a great comfort and encouragement this is to have a loving God who is both powerful and deeply concerned about our daily woes! What a blessing!

Yet behind all that anxiety is the Devil with his temptations seeking our eternal harm. **(read vs. 8-9)** A lion that is prowling around is very dangerous. A regular lion rests from time to time. The sleeping lion is not as dangerous as a prowling one, but the Devil does not sleep. Unless someone is thinking clearly and alert to the temptations around them, they can become easy prey. The Devil is not an adversary that we can take lightly. Though God has him on a leash, he wields great power in the world. The devil uses all forms of evil and temptation in an attempt to reduce us to a state of helpless terror or to weaken us. Yet it is trust in God's promise of forgiveness and life in heaven through Jesus that enables us to make a firm stand against Satan's attacks and keeps us moving forward with eager expectation of glory which the Devil cannot take from us.

Even as you and I endure all of that in this world at different times and in different ways, we are not enduring them alone. Those "sorry cards" are not being played only in our life, but in the lives of believers all over the world and have been from the beginning of Christ's Church. The large number of believers who are faithful in spite of all that they endure is an encouragement to us. Yet just as we share in those sufferings, we also are moving forward with the same eager anticipation of the glory that awaits us because of Jesus. We live every day with that assurance and a promise from God himself that he will see to it that we endure in the days, months, and years to come. **(read vs. 10-11)**

With each one of those words declaring what God himself will do for us, we are given four different pictures of how God carries out his promise. "Restore" is what a doctor does mending a broken arm by putting the bones back in line and adding a splint to keep those bones in place as they heal. "Establish" is what a carpenter working on a porch that is shaky because of rotting boards and making it firm again by replacing those boards. "Strengthen" is the work of a physical therapist building up that person's muscles. "Support" is a construction worker placing a good foundation under a house so that it will hold the building in its proper position.

In the game of Sorry those cards are always out there to be played. The same is true as we live in this world. Our faith is constantly being threatened by many kinds of "sorry cards" trying to keep us from moving forward with eager expectation of glory. However, we know they are ineffective. God who gave us the free gift of forgiveness through Christ wants us to be in heaven with him. He is constantly at our side doing whatever is necessary to keep us in the faith eagerly expecting glory. He mends our fractured faith. He firms up our shaky faith. He strengthens our weakening faith. He places a firm foundation under our faith all through Word and Sacrament to keep our faith focused on our Ascended Lord Jesus and the glory that awaits us. We are moving forward with an eager expectation of the glory that awaits us. To that we say with Peter, "To him be the glory and power forever and ever. Amen"