Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

When you travel on an airplane, the last thing that happens before take-off is that the cabin-crew provide final instructions, by way of the safety briefing – seat belt, carry-on baggage, oxygen masks, and where the exits are. And a phrase that you always hear in the safety briefing is “in the unlikely event of an emergency.” And that is a fair description, because the odds of arriving at your final destination are pretty good. But, for example, we were once unable to land at Wellington, because of high winds, and flew all the way back to Christchurch. So, the airline cannot guarantee that you will arrive at your final destination.

But when it comes to the Christian life, our final destination is guaranteed! And we will be considering this in more detail this afternoon, but the promise of God is that He will bring every believer to heaven. It is what is in view in verse 10: “*The God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*.” And so, what we have in this passage is **Final Instructions for Those En-route to Eternal Glory**.

And while the material in chapters 2:13-5:5b was aimed at various sections of the congregation, these final instructions are for the whole congregation. And they neatly divide into three main parts, which are instructions about being **Humble**, being **Watchful**, and being **Hopeful**.

Now, we are told that it is important to pay attention to safety briefings on airplanes. But the final instructions of Peter’s letter are way more important! Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, wanted **these attitudes and behaviours** to be the things that were ringing in the ears of his readers as they finished his letter. So, may the Spirit of the Lord impress these things on our hearts, today.

1. And as we consider these final instructions for those enroute to glory, the first one is: **Be Humble**. We noted in connection with verses 1-5 that the relationship between elders and members is especially important in times of persecution. And we saw in verse 5 that our duty as members of the church is to “*be subject to* (or in submission to) *the elders*.” And so, one could say that submission is the foundation piles that the building of spiritual growth rests on. But as we come to the second half of verse 5, we see that humility is the concrete that holds the ‘submission piles’ in place. To elders and members alike, Peter says, “*Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you*.”
   1. Now, thinking biblically, when I mention humility, what comes into your mind?
      1. Well, a most striking example of humility is what the Lord Jesus did in **John 13** – He washed the feet of His disciples. Washing feet was the lowliest, servant-like activity that there was. Would you like to wash our feet this morning? Right in between the toes? I am sure we are all thinking, No thank you! But that is what Jesus, the Son of God! did for His disciples.
      2. And then, soon after that, He was **crucified on the cross** – the ultimate act of humility. Think about it: He had done nothing wrong, and everyone there knew it. The people had chosen to release a hardened criminal instead of Him. He was forced to carry His own cross. He was forsaken by His Father. And He did all this to pay the price for your sins and mine.
         1. It is no wonder that **Philippians 2:8** says of Jesus, “*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*.”
      3. In the **Beatitudes**, Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit … Blessed are the meek,*” Now, in Bible times, being poor in spirit and meek was seen as weakness. Slaves were poor in spirit and meek. Being strong and assertive was valued. But Jesus values those who are poor in spirit and meek.
      4. In **Ephesians 4:2**, Paul urges believers to live “*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love*.”
   2. And the plain reality is that we are not naturally or accidentally humble. Look how Peter puts it: “***Clothe yourselves*** … *with humility*.” And the Greek word used here literally means ‘to tie something to yourself.’
      1. Think, perhaps, of an **apron**. Have you ever found yourself accidentally or randomly wearing an apron? Of course not. You have to put your head through the neck strap, and you have to tie the apron strings.
      2. And it is the same with humility – you have to put humility on and tie it on. Selfishness, pride, me-first, that we do naturally and easily, but humility is something we have to ‘put on’ or work hard at being.
   3. And the importance and value of humility is seen in the next sentence: “*For* *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."”* And these words are a quote from **Proverbs 3:34**, which we read earlier.
      1. “*God opposes the proud*.” Boys and girls, can you think of a Bible story where God deals with someone very severely because he was proud? **Nebuchadnezzar**. He thought that his position as king was all his own doing. But God made him insane for a time until he understood that it is God who raises up kings. “*God opposes the proud*.”
      2. You see, pride can cause a lot of damage in the church. Whether we are members or elders, if pride rises in our hearts, it will cause division and strife and hurt. If we stick to our guns and demand our rights and refuse to back down and be trampled on, we are not being like Christ and God will oppose us. So, we must work very hard to avoid pride, and confess it when we have been prideful.
      3. And look at what is promised to those willing, like Christ, to serve and/or to suffer injustice or unfairness: God “*gives grace to the humble*.”
         1. Grace is undeserved favour. Is there anyone here who needs grace? We all do! Each day we need God’s grace. We need Him to not treat us as our sins deserve. We need Him to forgive us, again.
         2. And the promise of the Lord Jesus in 2 Cor. 12:9 is: “*My grace is sufficient for you*.” Believer, do not ever think that there is not enough grace for you and your sin; God “*gives grace to the humble*.”
   4. Now, we will only be able to humble ourselves if we have the perspective described in **verse 6**: “*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you*.”
      1. I recommend that you do a Word study sometime about the **Mighty hand of God**. Use a website like www.biblegateway.com Enter ‘mighty hand’ and press search. The Exodus. Psalms. In John 10:29, Jesus said this of His sheep: “*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand*.” I am safe in the mighty hand of my Father in heaven!
      2. And if you understand that, then you can deal with persecution or injustice or unfairness. You will be able to be humble and persevere because the Lord has you in the palm of His mighty hand. And that, ultimately, is all that matters. And He will either bring you safely through this trial or hardship in this life, or he will bring you to Himself in the glories of heaven. So, you cannot lose! Like Jesus, your Saviour, you will be exalted at the proper time.
      3. And having this view of the love and care of your Father in heaven, so that you are able endure hardships is what is meant by **verse 7**: “*Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you*.”
         1. In Matthew 21, we read about the time when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. And before He began that journey, we are told that the people **put their cloaks on the back of the donkey**. And you can picture them doing that. Well, that action is the same word used here – “casting all your anxieties on Him.” You have to take them from your heart and throw them into the mighty hand of your Father in heaven.
         2. David put it like this in **Psalm 55:22**: “*Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved*.”
2. So, **be humble**. Remember the humility of Christ and strive to live for Him and like Him. And as the final instructions for those enroute to glory continue, we see, secondly, from **verses 8-9**, that we are to **be** **Watchful**: “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world*.”
   1. Now, we have come across the instruction to “***be*** ***sober-minded***” twice already in Peter’s letter – 1:13, 4:7. And we saw then that it means being disciplined and discerning, not doing whatever we feel like or what everyone else is doing.

* 1. And the next words are “***be watchful***.” And Peter was likely thinking here of Jesus’ instructions and example in the Garden of Gethsemane. You see, the hours before cross were, for Jesus, the most intense moments of temptation. The devil did all He could to turn Jesus away from the cross. It is why Jesus *needed* to pray. But He also knew that the evil one wanted to tempt the disciples. And he said to Peter, “*Peter, Peter, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat*.” So, “*watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*.” But did Peter pray? He did not; he fell asleep instead. And do you remember what Peter did soon after that? He denied Jesus, three times. So, Peter knew what he was talking about here, from bitter experience.
  2. And the reason why we must be sober-minded and watchful is **the devil**: “*Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*”
     1. I am sure you have seen those nature documentaries where we see lions stalking their prey. They crouch down in the long grass. And if their prey gets too close, the lion leaps out and grabs hold and devours it. And that is how the devil operates; he wants to devour us.
        1. It can be through **direct attack**:
           1. Think of Job who came under the direct attack of the devil.
           2. And **1 Timothy 3**, congregations are warned against appointing a new convert as an **elder**, because “*he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil*.” The devil loves to attack office-bearers, because if he devours them, there will be lots of collateral damage.
           3. And in **1 Corinthians 7:5**, **husbands and wives** are warned in relation to sex: “*Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control*.” The devil loves to attack marriage, because there will be lots of collateral damage.
        2. But even if it is not a direct attack of Satan himself, he is ultimately behind all the usual temptations of the world that *all* believers face – money, lust, or glory. And he loves to put ‘temptation traps’ in front of us that we can so easily stumble into.
     2. But you know, there is another way that lions can devour a person. And perhaps you have heard a story like this in the news. From time you read about a person who raised a lion from when it was a cub. And they thought that they were safe with the lion, even though it was now fully grown. And maybe cuddling the lion was fine for a while, but the time came when the lion did what lions do, and the person ended up getting badly bitten, or worse. And sadly, believers sometimes make the mistake of thinking that they can ‘cuddle the devil’ by playing around with sin. What we today call addictions or personality defects are an example of this. We say we cannot help it; it is who we are. But the reality is that if you try and ‘cuddle the devil,’ you can expect to get devoured.
        1. And there is a very vivid picture of this way back in **Genesis 4**. It is the account of **Cain**. And Cain was extremely jealous of his brother, Abel. And at one time God came to Cain and warned him about his jealousy. He said, “*Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it*.” And the image there is of sin as like a sexually aroused predator wanting to have its way with Cain. And we know what happened, don’t we. Cain opened the door and let it in and it ‘had its way with him’ and he killed Abel.
     3. So, we must understand how Satan and sin operate. He is dangerous!
  3. But he is also resistible. Peter says, “*Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world*.”
     1. So, generally, we see here that by faith in Christ and reliance on the Word and Spirit and prayer, **we can resist the temptations of the evil one**.
        1. In **1 John 2**, John describes believers as those who have “*overcome the evil one*.”
        2. And then in **1 John 4:4**, John explains why this is so: “*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*.”
        3. Is the devil powerful? Yes. But the Lord Jesus Christ has crushed his head! And the Spirit of Christ lives within us!
        4. So, you are not powerless pawns in the devil’s hand. By faith in Christ, you can resist him.
     2. But remember again that the **specific context in view here is** **persecution**. Satan uses persecution to attack our faith. We ask, Where is God? Why won’t He deliver us?
        1. But Jesus said, “*If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also*.” And we have already read in 1 Peter: “*For … you have been called [to suffer], because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps … [And] even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed … [And] Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you*.”
        2. And if we remember these things and preach them to ourselves, we will be able to resist the devil, firm in our faith.

1. And this leads us into the third part of these final instructions for those enroute to eternal glory. And we see this in **verses 10-11**, which is where we are instructed to **be Hopeful**: “*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*.”
   1. Will we suffer? Yes. But in the context of eternity, it will only be “*for a little while*.” But both now and even more fully in the life to come, “*the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ,* *will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*.”
   2. So, who or what is God to us? “*The God of all grace*.” Wow! And on our journey through 1 Peter, we have seen that He is a God of election. Before the creation of the world, He chose some of fallen humanity, which He will present to His Son, Jesus, on Judgment Day. So, if you are a believer, your salvation is anchored in God’s call in eternity past, and God’s plan to bless His Son, in eternity future! And that plan *cannot* and *will not* fail. And so, though this life is so hard and painful, and though you so often feel weak and fickle and assaulted and tired and unworthy and broken, God is *restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing you*.
      1. In April last year, I **broke a bone in my ankle**. And I had to wear a moon boot and not put too much pressure on that foot and get some physio. Well, now, it is completely healed. But it was healing every day. It slowly mended and got more and more stronger.
      2. Well, spiritually speaking, you are being made more and more like the Lord Jesus, every day. You are being mended or repaired to your original beauty and function as an image-bearer of God. You are growing in gospel confidence; trusting more and more that God’s word is true and reliable, regardless of what the world might say.
      3. And this is what being *restored, confirmed, strengthened and established* means. And while this will only be fully realized in the life to come, it begins already in this life by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.
      4. And this is what you must remember, even as you “*suffer for a little while*.”
   3. And so, because of the mighty hand of God, and knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is *restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing* every believer, Peter could not help but to burst into praise in verse 11: “*To Him be the dominion forever and ever.*” And all God’s people said, Amen.