

The God of All Grace

1 Peter 5:10-14 | Bryce Beale

Friends, suffering cannot win.

Oh, it can hurt. The blade of disappointment leaves a jagged cut. A simple sentence falls from the lips of a man with a white coat, and no matter how hard you wish and yearn and weep, no matter the energy of your soul or the force of your prayers, the pain continues, worsens, and terminates life.

Job was a man with a nature like ours, and he sat in a pile of ashes lamenting everything. Habakkuk saw the hordes of Babylon ascending with violence to the holy city.

Frenchmen wanted to live and work and love their families; but with a bullet Nazis killed every desire. For what? For greed, for hatred's sake. "No," mother's were made to say, "father is not coming home tonight. There will be no more of his humor, no more of his smile, presence, or protection in this home."

And what can we do? Shakespeare's Hamlet said we'd end our lives if we didn't fear a worse fate than this world in whatever comes afterward. Eastern and New Age philosophies minimize or deny the suffering. Christian Science says it's an illusion. The Prosperity Gospel refuses to accept suffering despite all evidence to the contrary, and makes their notion of faith the shield against all woes.

But Jesus—he weeps.

He climbs aboard this wrecked ship of a world as it takes on water and prepares to plunge its passengers to the ocean's bottom. He walks among them, sets his hand on the grieving mother, and weeps with her. He takes the children on his lap who have been abused by life, and hugs them as the tears roll down his cheeks. The father desperate in his dawning understanding that he cannot save his family, sobs, and Jesus takes him mid-sob into a strong embrace. Jesus doesn't read about the tragedies in the paper from shore. Jesus comes and feels their sorrow.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows!

But friends, I say again, suffering cannot win.

Mid-day but dark as midnight, Jesus suffers on the cross. He suffers! No one suffered more. Can we not say, since on him was laid the curse of death and the guilt of sin, that he suffered what many face in many places, but for him it was altogether and all at once.

The sinking hearts of cancer diagnoses are his; the Frenchwoman who weeps her fallen husband pours her grief upon him as out of a pitcher. Shattered childhoods and every form of disillusionment; the devastation of bad breakups, the lingering agony of past mistakes, the treacherous knife of Brutus and the kiss of Judas, the lonely tears dedicated to the earth in silence before a cold tombstone. Here they are in a single heart.

It was the will of the LORD to crush him in this way; he has put him to grief.

He breathes his last before the witnesses of this gruesome scene, but not before he cries, "It is finished!" Suddenly the ground, restless, shakes, and rocks are split in the darkness.

The people that day went home in sorrow, beating their chests. The officer overseeing the death confessed "Truly this man was the Son of God!"¹ How he suffered!

But friends, let me say it yet again: suffering cannot win.

The devil had driven his blade of suffering into the heart of Christ, with a smile; but immediately afterward he stepped back astonished. For out of the pierced heart of Christ flowed an irrepressible stream of grace. Even as the crowds dispersed, only a short distance away on the temple mount, the defeat of suffering and the devil was seen. That great curtain which had kept man from the presence of God, the veil before the holiest place, was torn in half from top to bottom.

The suffering of Christ was real—more real than we will ever know—but it did not win.

Through his suffering, Jesus opened the way to God, to life, to the never-ending, ever-flowing river of divine grace, to eternal paradise. Through suffering Jesus fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities."²

Suffering is real, and Jesus proved it. But grace is just as real. Suffering lasted for six hours, a real six hours—but only six hours. And afterward Christ was resurrected and glorified to the throne of heaven.

Suffering is real—but suffering cannot win. Grace wins.

I make this point because we have come, today, to the end of 1 Peter. In the past eight months we have studied a letter that has, at its very center, suffering. God's people were suffering in the Roman Empire.

¹ Mark 15:39 (ESV).

² Is. 53:11.

They had trusted in Jesus Christ and were promised grace and glory; now they are the subject of jokes and ridicule. Now the devil is arrayed against them like a lion. Where is the glorious grace promised them?

Peter has answered. And he summarizes his answer here at the end of his letter. So let us read the last four verses of 1 Peter, beginning in 5:10.

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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.³

I would like to finish our time in 1 Peter by setting our gaze, with a relentlessness that a desperate world demands, on that one title: “the God of all grace.” And we will consider it in light of all that surrounds it, and so observe most of the text before us, and tie up the ends of this sermon series.

Grace

So then we fix our minds on this, “the God of all grace.” What does this title of Jehovah mean?

And to answer that, of course, we will have to determine the meaning of this all-important word: grace.

And yet no definition seems broad enough to capture the whole concept contained in the word. Perhaps the best and most common definition is this: grace is God’s unmerited favor. It is God liking those who don’t deserve to be liked, and it applies to all the things God does because he likes those who don’t deserve it.

The fact that grace is unmerited is what makes it so precious to us. Paul speaks of “the free gift by the grace of...Jesus Christ.”⁴ Or again he says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”⁵ Grace is free! Grace is the cry in Isaiah: “Come, everyone who

³ Vv. 10-14.

⁴ Rom. 5:15.

⁵ Eph. 2:8-9.

thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”⁶ To say free grace is a true and redundant phrase—grace is by its nature free.

But further, it is free *favor*. And therefore nothing can be better than the grace of God, just as nothing can be better than God himself. Grace gives us God. Grace is the unfading smile of God that every child of man craves in his innermost person. It is the approval of a father.

It is the fulfillment of the Aaronic blessing:

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.⁷

Grace is the rain of God that falls unsummoned on a droughted earth, when the fields choked with dust begin to drink heaven’s bounty and turn green and lush. Grace is that breath of mountain air that fills the traveler’s lungs at dawn, when he surveys the purple mountains majesty christened by the golden rays of the awakening sun.

Grace is the need of earth and grace is the offer of heaven; it is the fuel on which the human spirit thrives, without which we shrivel into slavish creatures less than men.

Grace is the happy shock of a surprise visit by close friends who live far away, and all the happiness of first holding your child. Grace is, indeed, every happiness we know. It is all that is pleasant and good and right. It is the end of all wars and the protracted reign of peace.

Grace is the cause of all the good in the world, and of all the good we are granted to do. Paul was aware that he was nothing in himself,

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.⁸

It is almost as if grace has become its own entity or force or object, accompanying Paul and enabling him to labor beyond his own strength.

When Peter has written of grace in this letter, he has sometimes used it to refer to God’s present grace, his free help because he likes us in this present life. “May grace,” he writes, “and peace be multiplied to you.”⁹ The

⁶ Is. 55:1.

⁷ Num. 6:24-26.

⁸ 1 Cor. 15:10.

⁹ 1 Pet. 1:2 (cf. 5:5; those behaviors which God particularly likes are also called “grace” by Peter in 2:19-20).

spiritual gifts which God has given to his people are consequences of his “varied grace” in chapter 4.¹⁰

But Peter also speaks of grace as something we will later receive. “[S]et your hope,” he says, “fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”¹¹

In other words, grace touches every part of our lives as God’s people, and is everything to us. It is God’s unmerited favor, his unearned liking of us, and all the good that follows. Grace is, in this world, all that we have to hold to.

The God of all grace

And so we are happier than we can express that we have a God who is titled in this way: “the God of all grace.”

He is not stingy in granting us the precious rain of heavenly favor.

Think again on these suffering Christians to whom Peter writes. In the confusions of life, when it would be easiest to be disoriented and abandon hope, when previous hopes fall like men on the battlefield, irrecoverable, what do they have? What is the summary and heart of Peter’s brief encouragement to them?

It is here, in verse 12: “...I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God.” In other words, he says, “My message in this letter, which I give you that you may endure the troubles of this life with victorious joy, is this: that we have a God of all grace, that we have a Savior who has suffered for us, leaving us an example of suffering and the glory that follows, that this message is true.”

But it will take more to convince the heart when it is burdened under sorrows. No pat answers like, “It’s ok, God likes you,” will be sufficient.

While we endure the violent waves of this stormy world, what kind of a God do we have, what kind of grace, what kind of promises? How do we continue when our muscles seem to be strained to their final bit of strength and are ready to cease, so that we sink into this ocean of woes?

And at the moment of that question, from the shore in the dark distance stands a cross, glorious and bright, sending out its beams like a lighthouse in the shape of these words: “The God of All Grace.”

¹⁰ V. 10.

¹¹ 1:13 (cf. v. 10; 3:7).

A glorious grace

See from our text then, first, that God is the God of a *glorious* grace.

Verse 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.”

What do you want, Christian? Do you want your husband or your wife to love you more? Well, God can certainly make that happen—but your desire is much too small, I think. Do you want the right politicians in government? That is a minor thing. Think bigger. What of this—the end of wars? That too is good, but far too small. Jesus asks you what he asked the blind man: “What do you want me to do for you?”¹²

We are speaking with the God of not some, but all grace. He delights to lavish us with it. What do you want? God gives you much more.

This is what God has called you to: eternal glory in Christ.

Weeping may last for the night, very true—but only for a summer’s night. It is only a few hours, friends, and then we will see the first tinge of autumnal orange awakening along the horizon. This will shortly change to gold, then goldest gold as the Sun of Righteousness dominates the sky. Your suffering, the apostle says, occurs at three or four in the morning, and it will be followed by a long, bright day.

After a short time, the God of all grace will unleash his grace upon you, and those weakened by sufferings will be made strong.

“For I consider,” writes the apostle Paul, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”¹³ The day will be so bright that we will forget what the night looks like. We won’t say, “This glory is as bright as the darkness was dark.” No, stop right there—it isn’t even worth comparing the two.

As Paul elsewhere writes, “this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory *beyond all comparison*.”¹⁴

And here you see my sad problem this morning. I am supposed to speak of this glorious grace that will shortly be revealed, but I am not, in a true sense, able to compare it to anything you know.

Imagine the scene that you find most beautiful in this world, and manipulate every part of your imagination so that there is nothing but absolute beauty in your mind. Now, I am not permitted to say that heaven will be *like* that thought. It won’t be. It can’t be. When God

¹² Mark 10:51.

¹³ Rom. 8:18.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 4:17 (emphasis mine).

turns over the bowl of his grace and it crashes suddenly upon us, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, we will be enveloped in a beauty, a joy, an eternal experience that eclipses every other joy we have ever known.

What kind of a God, I ask, stores up these pleasures for his people? A God of all grace! A God favorably disposed toward us in Christ. He is more eager than any father ever has been that we should open our Christmas gift. He watches carefully our faces. Yes, we wept the night before that we had to go to bed on the eve of such a happy morning. But he calmly tucked us in, knowing that we would be delighted with his gifts the next day.

Whatever your prior conceptions of God maybe—perhaps you have thought him a cruel tyrant of the skies, a strict moral judge who lets men into heaven only begrudgingly—whatever your thoughts, if they do not understand God as this God of all grace, they miss the mark by far.

He is the God of a glorious grace.

[A strong grace](#)

But there is more.

Peter cannot finish the body of his letter, and this promise of glorious grace without a doxology breaking in upon his mind.

Verse 11: “To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

When I am driving down Morgan Ave., I almost always look to see what words are on the sign of the Unitarian Universalist Church there. In high school we had the woman who led that church come in and speak to our world religion’s class. I do not know if she is still there.

I will be the first to say that the goals of that group are admirable—peace, serving others, and so forth. But there is no strength there. There cannot be. You cannot stand firm without something to stand firm on. No matter how well braced your legs are to stand, no matter your great determination to do so, if you have no ground of what you believe, you cannot stand.

But this God of all grace is not the God of a cheap grace, or a light grace. It is a strong, immovable grace.

When he wishes to act for our good, he does not first ask, “Will this offend someone?” His only question is, “Do I want to do it?” And if he does, he does it. Because the dominion belongs to him. The kingdom is his own, and he is the king.

The Centurion's faith spoke to Jesus like this: "only say the word, and my servant will be healed."¹⁵ All authority in heaven and on earth is his.

His grace is strong enough to accomplish all that concerns us.

So, you see a young person excited about the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a moment of joy he calls upon the name of the Lord, places his faith in Christ and his work upon the cross. In the weeks that follow, there is a great enthusiasm in his life for the things of God.

And you, if you have been around the block a few times, so to speak, may say to yourself, "Ah, another one enters the emotional phase of Christianity. I've seen this so many times; in a few months, when life gets hard and the excitement dies down, he'll toss Christianity in the waste basket and wish he hadn't made so much racket about it."

Oh, you underestimate the strength of God's grace.

See verse 12: "By Silvanus [or 'Silas'], a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you..."

Look, here is a man who has long been a follower of the Way, and who set his hand to the plow and isn't looking back. He was a companion of Paul, and there we saw him unjustly beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. "See," you say, "the hard times have come, this one will fall away like the rest." But then you hear a noise coming from the cell in which Paul and Silas are kept. It is not weeping. It is not moaning. It is singing.

A faithful brother indeed! The grace of God sustained his soul, not one but many years, so that he could sing his hymns to God in the darkest dungeon of human opposition. Behold a strong grace.

"Well," you say, "what of others who really have, it seems, turned away from Christ. I can name one right now: Mark, mentioned in this very passage."

Let us look, in verse 13: "She who is at Babylon [that is, the church in Rome], who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son."

"Aha," you say, "this is likely the John Mark who abandoned Paul and Barnabas partway through their first missionary journey. Where is the grace of God here?"

I'll reply. It is here more evident than almost anywhere else.

¹⁵ Matt. 8:8.

Yes, John Mark abandoned the cause for a time, probably overwhelmed by the hardships of the task. Indeed, he was like Peter himself, who in the face of persecution denied Jesus three times in one night.

But it is here that the strength of God's grace flexes itself.

For notice what Peter says, so many years later, of John Mark: "my son." Hear, further, what Paul later wrote of him, in a letter: "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry."¹⁶

What grace is stronger—that which approves of the good man and tells him, "Keep on going," or that which sees the man snatched up by a lion and, like King David, chases that lion down, grabs it by the mane, and drives his weapon into its heart?

God's grace is enough to keep us, but also enough to deliver his children when they begin to stray. His grace embraces the friend, but also runs to embrace the prodigal returning, with a hug not unlike the "kiss of love" mentioned at the end of this passage—a greeting of acceptance and warmth and love.

God's grace is strong enough to do this.

Conclusion

And that, my friends, is the message of 1 Peter—namely, that we ought to continue on in the footsteps of Christ, no matter the sufferings that arise, because we are in the care of the God of all grace. He loves us and will keep us, and no sword or famine will sever the cord of love that runs directly from his heart into ours.

And so, I end my message, and this series, in the way that Peter ends his letter, in verse 14: "Peace to all of you who are in Christ."

If Christ is yours by faith, then where the immense and horrid wrath of God, his frown and hatred and anger, once hung suspended over your head, now there is a cloud that perpetually pours out the rain of God's glorious and mighty grace upon your life.

God likes you, and what more could you desire than that.

That, truly, is peace. It was Peter's—may it be yours too.

¹⁶ 2 Tim. 4:11.