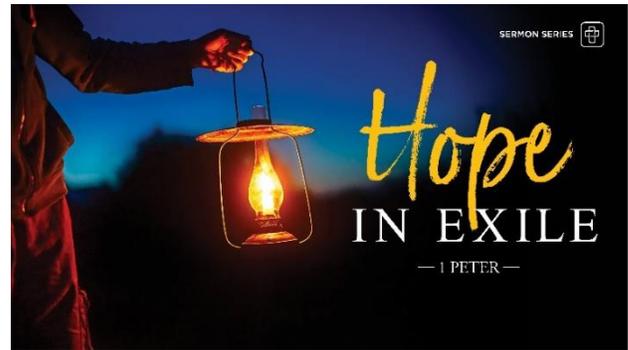


# The God of All Grace

1 Peter 5:10-14

Blake Glosson August 30, 2020



Gracious God, we come to you this morning broken to be mended. We come, Lord, wounded to be healed. We come desperate to be rescued. We come empty to be filled. O Lord, You know we come guilty to be pardoned by the blood of Christ the Lamb. Holy Spirit, I ask that You would please use the preaching of Your Word this morning to accomplish in us what we could never accomplish in ourselves. For everyone here, I pray that You would bring encouragement. Strengthen and sanctify us this morning. Fill us with the love of Christ, we pray in His name. Amen.

We used to play a game in youth group called “Soapy Tarp Tug-of-War.” If you’ve never played this game before, it’s pretty much exactly what it sounds like. You’re trying to play tug-of-war while standing on a slippery, soapy tarp. If you have played this game before, or if you’ve seen it played, you’ll know that it pretty much always goes just about exactly the same way.

For about ten to 15 seconds, there’s some even tugging on either side. Then very quickly, one team begins to lose ground. You’ll see members of that team slipping and falling and running out of strength. Very quickly, within a matter of seconds, everything begins to unravel for this one team.

I find it somewhat humorous, because as this is happening, you’ll see bystanders who are standing just a few feet away from this losing team, not helping pull, not in the struggle, yet they offer them words of encouragement like, “Pull harder!” Or, “Hey, don’t slip!” Or, “Move the rope that way.” You can imagine being one of the members of this losing team as you hear these words. “You are slipping. You are falling. You’re out of strength.”

As you hear these words, you’re probably not thinking, “Pull harder? Try harder? Why didn’t I think of that? Thank you so much.” No, probably what you’re thinking in this moment is, “Listen, now is not the time for mere platitudes. What I need in now is something I can stand on firmly. Beyond that, I need someone to help me pull this rope. Or better yet, I need someone to pull this rope for me, because I don’t have any strength left.”

Here's the point. When we're slipping and falling, when we're out of strength in this life, when we are suffering and struggling to stand firm in our faith, we need much more than mere platitudes. We need more than someone yelling, "Hey, just pull a little bit harder." No, in all our suffering, we need tangible help from outside ourselves.

The book of 1 Peter was written to suffering Christians like you and me who needed much more than mere platitudes. They needed substantial encouragement. They needed something they could stand firm in, not only in the most painful hardships of life, but also in the very real threat of death for the sake of their faith. Peter's primary purpose in writing this letter was to encourage suffering Christians to stand firm in their faith.

Do you see it there in verse 12? He says, "*I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!*" In these closing words, Peter gives us a concise summary of the encouragement he has offered to suffering Christians throughout the letter. Notice that the encouragement Peter offers through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is unlike the empty wishful platitudes of this world.

Peter does not forget who he's talking to. He remembers that he's talking to suffering, hurting, broken, tired Christians who are undoubtedly tempted at times to give up, despair and take the easy way out. So what encouragement does he offer to these Christians? Or to put it another way, in all of our suffering as Christians—in your suffering as a Christian this morning—what must we look to in order to stand firm in our faith? What must we look to for encouragement?

We see the beginning of his answer to this question in the first five words of verse ten. Do you see it? "*The God of all grace...*" Notice that in Peter's final words to these suffering Christians, he does not tell them to look inside themselves for strength in their suffering. No, rather than telling us as suffering, tired Christians to look inside ourselves for strength we don't even have—like "Pull harder!"—the Holy Spirit is beckoning us to look outside ourselves to the God Who has everything we need.

I want to be careful right now because I know there are many people underneath these tents, many people listening to this sermon online, who are feeling deep down the pain of suffering I cannot even imagine. It might be suffering because of your faith, as Peter has been specifically referring to throughout this letter. It might be simply the pain of living in a broken world during a global pandemic. It might be loneliness, anxiety, apathy, sorrow, guilt, regret, frustration, confusion.

Many of these things have been exacerbated in recent months. Maybe there's something you're struggling with even this morning. Regardless of your specific suffering, one of the hardest parts of your pain is likely to be the feeling that no one fully understands what you're going through. No one fully understands your pain. And that's true.

Not one single person under these tents, not even the people who are closest to you, fully understands your pain. Not one person in this world fully understands your pain. But the God of all grace does. This is Who Peter, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wants us to set our hope on fully in our suffering. He wants us to cling to the God of all grace for encouragement in our suffering.

How exactly does clinging to or looking to this God of all grace give us encouragement and strength to stand firm in our suffering? How does this work? In order to understand how this works, we must first understand what this description of God is saying and also what it is not saying. Let's briefly consider three things this description of God is not saying about God and three things this description of God is saying about God. What does it mean that God is the God of all grace? Let's look at three observations.

### **1. God is not the God with all grace—He is the God of all grace.**

In other words, grace isn't just something God gives. Grace is Who God is. He is the very source of grace. He is the fountain of grace. Grace flows out of Him. What does this mean for us? First, it means that in our suffering, grace will come in proximity to the fountain—to God Himself.

Let me give you an illustration. About a month ago we had a Preachers Cohort meeting at David and Marcy Wollen's home. We were out on their back deck doing our little study. It was absolutely baking that day. It had to be at least 150 degrees outside, maybe more. We were out there literally three to four hours. It was extremely challenging—maybe one of the hardest things I've ever endured in my life. Fortunately, David had this little mist sprayer turned on a few feet away from the table we were sitting at. I don't know what this mist sprayer thing is called, but I'll call it the fountain of mist for the sake of this story.

Every few minutes, this fountain of mist would spray us with cool water. In the heat of the day, it felt absolutely incredible. Part of me wanted to just stand up, walk over and lay myself over this sprayer. I didn't because I thought that would be both rude and kind of weird. But here's the point. In the heat of the day, it was proximity to the fountain of mist that gave us

the refreshment we needed to carry on. The fountain did not take us out of the heat, but it did give us the refreshment we needed to carry on. It sustained us in the heat.

In the same way, it is proximity to the fountain of grace—proximity to God Himself—that will save, sustain strengthen us in the heat of suffering. If you are near God in this life, that is not going to take you out of the heat of suffering in this life, but nearness to God will give you the strength you need to stand firm in the heat of suffering.

I'm going to talk more in a few moments about what it means to draw near to this God of all grace, but for right now, what does it mean that God is the God of all grace? Our first observation is that He is not the God with all grace—He is the God of all grace. Grace is not something God gives. Grace is Who God is, therefore grace will come when we are in proximity to the fountain.

## **2. God is not the God of some grace—He is the God of all grace.**

This point means at least two things for us in our suffering. First, He has grace for every need we have. Here's how Puritan Thomas Goodwin put it:

God has a multitude of all kinds of mercy. There is no sin or misery for which God does not have a mercy. Just as there are a variety of miseries which we humans are subject to, so also God has in Himself a shop—a treasury—of all sorts of mercies. If your heart be hard, His mercies are tender. If your heart be dead, He has mercy to liven it. If you be sinful, He has mercy to sanctify you and to cleanse you. As large and as various are our wants, so large and various are God's mercies. So then we may come boldly to find grace and mercy to help us in time of need, because God has a mercy and a grace for every need.

Have you ever gone to a department store and asked someone, “Hey, do you have this particular product?” They say, “Ah, no, sorry, we don't have that.” This is never the case with God. You will never go to God with such a unique trial or misery or sin that He says, “Ah, sorry, I don't have a grace for that particular pain.” God is the God of all grace, meaning He always has grace to help you in the exact situation you're in.

So what does it mean that God is the God of all grace? First, He has grace for every need we have and second, He also has an infinite amount of this grace. He never runs out of grace? What does this mean for us? Two things.

First, it means God is never, ever frustrated when you come to Him over and over and over and over and over and over and over again for grace and help, as if you are

somehow taking away from His limited supply. No, unlike everyone else in your life, God has no hint of a scarcity mentality. He does not feel threatened by the idea of giving you Himself. God is an infinite fountain of grace, which means He's always giving and never losing. He is perfectly self-sufficient, and because of this God is able to give you all of Himself at all times, unlike anyone else in your life.

He's not afraid of overextending Himself. He's not afraid of burnout. He's not afraid of giving you so much grace that you will then surpass Him in greatness. He's not afraid that if He gives you grace today and tomorrow and the next day, then you're going to become too needy and start coming back to Him daily—as if He would be annoyed by that. It's the exact opposite of that. God is delighted when you come to Him for mercy and help so He can continually lavish the riches of His infinite grace on you again and again.

Here's how Dane Ortlund put it, commenting on Thomas Goodwin:

Christ's own joy, comfort, happiness and glory are increased and enlarged by His showing grace and mercy, in His pardoning, relieving and comforting His members here on earth. Christ does not get flustered and frustrated when we come to Him for fresh forgiveness, for renewed pardon, with distress and need and emptiness.

No, that is the whole point. It's what He came to heal. He went down into the horror of death and plunged out through the other side in order to provide a limitless supply of mercy and grace to His people. Far from being flustered and frustrated, the glory and happiness of Christ are actually enlarged and increased still as His members come to have the purchase of His death more and more laid forth upon them, so that when their sins are pardoned, their hearts more sanctified and their spirits comforted, then Christ comes to see the fruit of His labor. His joy keeps us in His heart as He continues to care for and love His children here below, to water and to refresh them in every moment.

When you, dear Christian, come to Christ for mercy and help in your anguish and your perplexity and your sinfulness, you are going with the flow of His own deepest wishes, not against them. We tend to think that when we approach Jesus for His help in our need and mercy amidst our sins, we somehow detract from Him or lessen Him or impoverish Him, when in reality, unlike any other person, Christ's heart is never drained by our coming to Him. His heart is actually filled up all the more by our coming to Him.

So to put it the other way around, when we hold back from coming to Him, lurking in the shadows, fearful and failing, we miss

out not only on our own increased comfort, but also on Christ's increased comfort. He lives for this. This is what He loves to do. Christ is comforted when you draw from the riches of His atoning work, because in doing that, His own body is getting healed.

Dear Christian, God is not frustrated when you come to Him over and over and over again for grace and help, as if you are somehow taking away from His limited supply. No, He has an abundance of grace. He has too much grace and delights when you come to Him for grace and help in your time of need.

I'll add one more thing to this point. Even though God has an unlimited supply of grace, this does not mean He is going to give you this morning all the grace you're going to need for the rest of your life. He will give you today the grace you need for today, then tomorrow He'll give you the grace you need for tomorrow. This is the consistent teaching throughout the whole Bible. This is why God told the Israelites to gather a day's worth of manna and not to gather more for tomorrow. This is why in Lamentations, Jeremiah says God gives us daily mercies. This is why Jesus Himself taught us to pray for our daily bread. God wants us to depend on Him daily, and I promise you that He will be faithful to provide daily when you come to Him daily for mercy and help in the time of need.

So what does it mean for God to be the God of all grace? First, God is not the God with all grace—He is the God of all grace. In other words, grace is not just something God gives, but grace is Who God is and grace in our suffering will come in proximity to God Himself.

Second, God is not the God of some grace—He is the God of all grace. In other words, He has grace for every need we have and He has this grace in abundance. He is delighted to show you this grace when you come to Him daily for help.

### **3. God is not the God of all anger or justice or \_\_\_\_\_. He is the God of all grace.**

Third and finally, what does it mean that God is the God of all grace? The third observation is that God is not the God of all anger, the God of all wrath or the God of all justice. Nor is He the God of all power, the God of all toughness or the God of all \_\_\_\_\_—you fill in the blank. He is the God of all grace.

This description of God is not saying He is not just, that He's not powerful, or that He's not any of His attributes. It also does not mean that God is only grace, as if He will not enact justice on those who refuse to humble themselves and come to Him for grace. What this

description of God is getting at is the very heart of God. It's not just what God does, but Who God is.

Here's the point. In your suffering today, dear Christian, you do not have a God of all sternness or a God of all toughness or a God of all anger. You do not have a cold, militaristic God. You do not have a God Who thinks your suffering is just a little bit too petty. No, in your suffering, you have a God of all grace. You have a God Who is gentle with you. You have a God Who is patient with you. You have a God, dear Christian, Who loves you. You have a God Who, in your suffering, is filled with the deepest compassion. You have a God, according to Micah 7, Who delights in showing you mercy. You have a God Who, according to Ephesians 2:7, saved you in order that *"in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness"* toward you by lavishing His infinite grace on you for all eternity. Peter wants suffering Christians to be comforted and encouraged by this reality.

Not only that, Peter actually believes that God's grace is the whole key to enduring suffering faithfully as a Christian. Notice again what he says in 1 Peter 5:12: *"This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!"* What should we stand firm in through our suffering? Should we stand firm in our own strength? Should we stand firm in our own will power? Should we stand firm in our own determination and toughness? Should we stand firm in the security of our circumstances? No. All of these things will fail us at some point.

According to 1 Peter 5, true encouragement and endurance in your suffering will come only when you stand firm in the grace of God. The grace of God is the key to enduring suffering faithfully as a Christian. To be a little more precise, the God of all grace Himself is the key to enduring suffering faithfully as a Christian, and nearness to this God of grace is what will sustain us in the heat of suffering.

So for the last time, what does it mean that God is the God of all grace? Three observations.

- First, notice that God is not the God with all grace, but He's the God of all grace. In other words, grace is not just something God gives. Grace is Who God is.
- Second, God is not the God of some grace—like He's got a little bit. No, He's the God of all grace. In other words, He has grace for every need we have and He has this grace in abundance.
- Third and finally, God is not the God of all anger, wrath, justice, power or toughness. He is the God of all grace and proximity to the fountain of grace is what will save us, sustain us and strengthen us in the heat of suffering.

We just spent well over a half of the sermon on the first five words of the passage. I want to spend our last few moments together this morning looking at just two manifestations of the grace of God we must cling to if we want to have encouragement in our suffering. First, we must cling to the grace of God's family. We see that in verses 12-14. Then second, we must cling to the grace of God's promises which we will see in verses 10-11.

### **We must cling to the grace of God's family.**

We see this in verses 12-14. If you just glance over these verses, you'll notice at least five references to the body of Christ, to other believers. Twice Peter refers to these other believers using familial language. He calls Silvanus a brother; he calls Mark a son.

This is an absolutely remarkable and beautiful passage. Maybe some of you have memorized 1 Peter 5:10. I mean, come on. Are there any more encouraging words? God is the God of all grace and has called you to His eternal glory in Christ. He Himself will restore, establish, strengthen and support you. I mean, there are so many encouraging words in this passage.

Yet surprisingly, as I studied this passage, two words I never would have guessed would have any relevance to me have become two of the more impressive words to me in this passage. It's the first two words of verse 12: "*Through Silvanus...*" You might say, "That is really weird. Not only is that a weird name, but I don't understand why that would have any relevance or significance to us whatsoever."

Well, let's follow Peter's flow of logic here. You'll need to pay extra close attention to the next 15 seconds in order to understand what I'm getting at. Don't tune out for the next 15 seconds, okay? Ready? In verse 12, Peter says that this written letter is itself the true grace of God. Do you see that? He says, "*I have written to you briefly in order to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God.*" What is the true grace of God? The content of this letter. In other words, Peter is arguing that God's Word is itself a manifestation or an outpouring of God's grace. Are you still tracking with me?

Now, if this letter is itself the true grace of God, then it is through Silvanus that right now we are receiving the true grace of God, because Silvanus pens this letter as Peter was dictating it. Here's the point. God will usually not just drop down His grace out of heaven in some ethereal, spiritual sense, completely separate from any human means. Thank God, He does do that sometimes. But God loves to use family members to distribute and communicate His grace to

other family members. He loves to partner with His people, using their specific gifts, experiences and personalities to distribute and communicate His grace to the world.

In other words, you can be the true grace of God for someone else. God wants to use you specifically, with your specific gift, your specific personality, your specific experiences, to lavish His grace on those around you—on the family of God. In fact, this is your purpose. When you act on behalf of God and communicate His grace to those around you, you are doing what you are literally created to do as someone created in the image of the God of all grace.

This is at least in part why Peter tells us to greet one another with a kiss of love. Fortunately, the emphasis here is not on kiss, but on love. God wants to communicate His love to each of us through the family of God. Now, here's the point. If we want to experience the grace of God in our suffering, we must cling to God's family, to the grace of God's family.

I'll add one more thing really quick on this point. You're sitting among the family of God right now. Part of what makes the family God so special is not only that it is an affectionate family that communicates God's grace and love to one another, but also that it is an eternal family. Notice what Peter says in verse ten: God has "*called you to his eternal glory.*" Then in verse 13 he says your fellow believers are "*chosen together with you.*" In other words, you have not been chosen for eternal glory alone. What is this? This is a clear promise that our relationships within the family of God do not end at death.

My grandma passed away this past December and our family found great comfort in a few words she had scribbled down in the first page of her Bible. We don't know exactly where she got this quote from, but here's what it said: "Christians who have passed are not in the past, they are in the future."

This is the message of 1 Peter 5:10-14. Dear Christian, God has not only called you to His eternal glory, but He has also called the family of God to be with you in eternal glory. God has given us an affectionate eternal family. So what must we cling to in order to have encouragement in our suffering as Christians? First, we must cling to the grace of God's affectionate eternal family.

### **We must cling to the grace of God's promises.**

Second and lastly, we must cling to the grace of God's promises. Notice again verse ten. I love this. "*The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.*" I thought

about just coming up here and reading that passage over and over again. Isn't it so powerful? Isn't it so precious?

As we close, I want to very briefly point out two things about these four words which are describing eternal glory. You saw them there: restore, establish, strengthen and support.

First, the final three words—establish, strengthen and support—what do they all have the connotation of? They all describe security. One of the most defining characteristics of eternal glory is perfect security. Now, you might ask, “How does that give me encouragement in my suffering right now?” There are many possible ways, but here's one.

A couple weeks ago David Sunday preached on anxiety. We might define anxiety as the feeling of insecurity, the fear of collapse. In the new heavens and new earth, there will not be a drop of anxiety. The new heavens and new earth will be a place of perfect security, because we will be fully fortified by the strength and support of God Himself.

It's that He “*will himself...establish, strengthen, and support you...*” So the first thing to notice about these four words is that eternal glory will be a place of perfect security. We will be free from anxiety forever.

The second thing to notice about these four words is that while the last three words—establish, strengthen and support—all have the connotation of security, the first word, restore, has a connotation of perfect healing. In fact, this word can even be translated as “perfect.” He will himself perfect you.

Here's the idea. When I was in high school, I broke my ankle and tore a few ligaments while playing football. The recovery process was pretty brutal. I had to wear this massive boot on my foot. I even had to get wheeled around in a wheelchair by my friends in high school. And sleeping was the absolute worst. You can imagine trying to sleep with this massive boot on your foot while also having pain in your ankle.

Anyway, I remember a few weeks after I had gotten injured I was lying in my bed at home, probably pouting and feeling really bad about myself. My friend came over and brought me this massive bag of puppy chow (you know, that chocolate covered cereal snack) to try to cheer me up. When I saw it, I was very happy. I was still in pain and my wounds were not healed, but the puppy chow did cheer me up and took my mind off the suffering.

This story is precisely not what eternal glory will be like. Eternal glory is not God giving us a treat to cheer us up from our wounds in this life. No, eternal glory is God healing all our wounds. It is God wiping away every tear from our eyes and taking away sorrow forever. When

the Holy Spirit says He Himself will restore you, He's not saying that after 80 years of suffering in this life, God will give you some puppy chow or a treat to make you feel better.

No, restoration is the promise that God will redeem every ounce of the suffering you experienced in this life, and through it He will bring everlasting joy. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:17, this "*light momentary affliction*" only comes before eternal glory; it is actually preparing for us "*an eternal weight of glory*" beyond all comparison. In some way, for every Christian, eternal glory will grow out of the seed of faithful suffering in this life. Somehow through the pain of suffering we experience in this life, eternal beauty and everlasting joy will be born.

So what shall we say then? I'm not sure I could end the sermon with any better words than the words of verse 11: "*To him*"—to the God of all grace—"*be dominion forever. Amen.*"

Before I say, "Let's stand to sing," I'll say one more thing. Maybe you're here this morning, still trying to pull with your own strength. Maybe you're slipping and falling, knowing you need help. I would urge you to cry out to the God of all grace. You can tell Him, "I am a sinner in desperate need of Your grace. Please save me. Be my Lord. Be my God. Be the God of all grace for me." Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out." So come to Him this morning. He will not turn you away.

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