

“Sustaining Grace”

Holiness

1 Peter 5:8-14

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Bruce: Gracious and merciful Lord, be our Teacher this day. Open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Let’s continue in our study of the book of 1 Peter. We began this study a year ago and this is lesson No. 29. And we began this study on the theme of holiness, which is the theme of the books of 1 and 2 Peter.

Peter started off by helping us understand our great and glorious salvation in 1 Peter chapter 1. And men, the best way to understand holiness is to understand holiness in the terms of your salvation. In other words, as Charles Spurgeon says, “An immediate consequence of saving faith is obedience. And therefore holiness is an evidence of your salvation.” So the degree to which you and I understand our salvation—our gracious and glorious salvation which he gave to us in chapter 1—will be the degree to which we will understand that the evidence of that in our lives is our holiness.

So Peter says that there are several features of salvation that he wants us to look at as he told us about our gracious and glorious salvation that forms the basis of our understanding of holiness.

I’ve outlined for you what we’ve studied so far in chapter 1. He introduced us to this living hope. Salvation is our living hope.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 was submission. That is the pilgrim life. That is how we live our lives. When you and I understand the magnificence of our gracious and glorious salvation, we now understand why submission is important as an expression of the evidence of our salvation. And that’s what Peter taught us in chapters 2 and 3.

Then in chapter 4 he began the major theme of suffering, basically saying that if you understand your salvation, you’ll understand submission and then you’ll know how to suffer correctly. He talks about suffering correctly. And that is that the refining trial in our lives is how God uses suffering to refine us.

And lastly, in chapter 5, the theme and the subject is that of sustaining grace. And what we want to talk about today is the sustaining grace that God gives us in the midst of suffering.

So as we continue our examination of this particular passage, I want to call your attention to verses 9-14. But let’s begin with verse 8 to keep it in the right context. 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 8-14.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so at the proper time He may exalt you,. Casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. 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 sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal

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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 in 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.”

May God be pleased to open our eyes for His glory. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Peter now concludes this letter with a wonderful summary of holiness. He started with the grace of God and now he’s going to finish with the grace of God. And basically he is going to tell us this—that we are saved by grace but we’re also Grace is God’s resources at Christ’s expense. All of life is God’s resources at Christ’s expense. And so now he concludes with God’s unmerited favor in suffering. He’s saying that if there is God’s unmerited favor in your salvation, then there’s going to be God’s unmerited favor in your sufferings also. So either way, it’s all of grace.

sustained by grace. Oftentimes we have a theology that says that you are saved by grace but you’re maintained by works. Peter is going to say no. It’s all of grace!

The two things that we need to look at in this context, men, would be these. What is your attitude about grace in the midst of suffering? What are our thinking patterns about grace in the midst of suffering? Remember, salvation leads to submission. Submission leads to suffering. Suffering leads to subjection.

Now we’re to the point of saying this. What is the attitude that you and I need to think about when we go through this period of suffering based upon God’s grace and His sustaining power?

A couple things I would point out for you in the Scripture would be these. First of all, *we have God’s grace*. We need to start off with this.

Remember, all of life is about grace. So Peter reminds us that we have God’s grace. Our salvation is because of His grace. Look at 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 10.

“*Concerning this salvation*”—which he is introducing to us, which is all of grace—“*the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully.*”

“The grace that was to be yours.” In other words, we do have God’s grace because of our salvation. God called us before we called on Him. That’s chapter 1, verse 2.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Peter 1:2. “*According to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.*”

Bruce: God called us before we called Him. The reason we respond is because of God’s grace. He called us into a saving relationship with Himself.

Now notice the phrase in 1 Peter. “The God of all grace.” You’ll see that. “The God of all grace.” Literally, what that means is that it speaks of God as the source of all spiritual comfort and health in our lives. God is the source of all spiritual comfort in life.

Let me give you some ideas of what the magnitude of God’s grace does in sustaining us. We do have God’s grace because of salvation.

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Now we need to understand that grace was freely given. Grace was freely given. Psalm 84 verse 11.

Transcriber’s Note: Psalm 84:11. *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows grace and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.”*

Bruce: Acts chapter 11 verse 23.

Transcriber’s Note: Acts 11:23. *“When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord.”*

Bruce: Acts chapter 13 verse 43.

Transcriber’s Note: Acts 13:43. *“And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.”*

Bruce: In other words, if you think that grace is something you and I earn, it’s no longer a gift. It’s no longer freely given. Grace was something that God was pleased to give from before the foundation of the world—to give us His grace so that we might enjoy Him for eternity and do that for His glory.

So first of all, grace was freely given. Grace also empowers people for service. Grace is the energizing force for our desire to be servant oriented.

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 3 verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Corinthians 3:10. *“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it.”*

Bruce: Also 1 Corinthians 15 verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Corinthians 15:10. *“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 was with me.”*

Bruce: Not only is grace freely given, but grace is the force that calls us into service. It’s our energizing force that calls us to be servants

Also, it enables people to live a simple life. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 2.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Corinthians 1:2. *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Bruce: Notice this in 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 10.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Peter 4:10. *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

Bruce: Grace is not given for selfish reasons. And then grace is given to the humble. 1 Peter 5 verse 5.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Peter 5:5. *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

Bruce: Now Peter is telling us that all that comes from God is grace because we have no merit of our own. Grace is defined as *unmerited favor*. The reason we have all the things of God’s grace is because we have no merit of our own.

It’s what Jesus taught at His first staff meeting with the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount in the preamble known as the Beatitudes. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* It’s

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when we recognize that you and I are spiritually bankrupt, that there is nothing that I can do that is going to please God. I’m spiritually bankrupt. I’m a beggar before Him. That’s the moment when you understand the significance of grace.

And so the first thing that you and I think about the attitude of how I look at grace in the midst of my suffering is that we need to realize this—that we have God’s grace. Logically speaking if you didn’t have God’s grace, you wouldn’t be suffering because the world wouldn’t be after you because you live a different lifestyle. So in one way it’s a backhanded compliment to help you understand the significance of your salvation. It’s because the world is opposing you because of your standard of excellence in living according to the Scripture. The world is going to oppose you.

And so we need, first of all, to understand that our attitude in the midst of suffering is this. We have God’s grace, or we would not even be suffering.

Secondly, for your consideration, some other things dealing with this. The word *call* does not mean merely an invitation. When God called us by His grace into a saving faith, it means a divine summons. There is a divine summons behind God’s grace. The one summoned is made willing to obey—not against his will, but with his own will. He is made to do that. It’s the energizing force behind it. It’s like this. It’s willingness to become willing. All of a sudden, when God’s grace gives us salvation, He gives us the willingness to be willing to want to obey. This is known theologically as the *effectual call*. There is an effect made about it when God calls you into saving faith. And the one called always responds to the enabling of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:10. When God calls you into a saving relationship, He is the One who begins to change your will and you now have a willingness to be willing. That’s why you and I begin to respond to Him according to His grace.

So we need to start off by understanding this, men. If you are in Christ today, it’s because of the fact that we have God’s grace. The effectual call of God is for a purpose, and that is God’s glory.

Now that leads us to the next thing. *We are going to glory*. Now what I mean by that is that I’m not saying we’re going to heaven. Yes, that is the end result. That is the final glorification of our bodies when we go to heaven. Remember that the pilgrim’s life is made up of three major events—your justification, your sanctification and your glorification. Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin. Sanctification is freedom from the power of sin. And glorification is freedom from the presence of sin.

Now I’m not talking about the presence of sin. Yes, that is the ultimate glory that we will experience. We will no longer be in the presence of sin. And when a believer dies, he is glorified. That’s why we celebrate the glorification of a believer. It’s a glorification process.

But what I’m suggesting here is this. Because we have God’s grace, everything that we are going through in our lives is about God’s glory. Now let me try to explain what I mean by that.

It ends up in our glorification. And we are going to be there. This is the wonderful inheritance for which we have been created. Look at 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 4.

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you.” Now that’s the ultimate glorification.

But what about the process in between? What are we going through between now and then, as we just read in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 4? Whatever begins with God’s grace will always end up in God’s glory. We need to understand this—that whatever starts with God’s grace is going to end up for God’s glory. That’s the purpose of our salvation.

So that means that everything between my gracious calling unto salvation and my gracious being taken home to glorification, the final stage,--everything in between is what? We are going to glory, because of the way of our lives, because everything that starts off with grace always ends up in God’s glory. Now that’s the key principle for us to understand about the attitude of life. Whatever starts with God’s grace always ends up in God’s glory. And so in everything in between in our lives, we are going to glory as we live our lives in obedience to Christ.

Psalm 84 verse 11 says this. *“The LORD God is a sun and a shield. The LORD bestows grace and honor.”* The word is favor; the word is grace. He bestows grace and honor to those whom He calls.

Look at Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 22-26. God is the reason for our salvation. Let’s take a look at that. We haven’t referred to that in recent years. Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 22-26. This is the prophet Ezekiel’s description of our gracious and glorious salvation that Peter is alluding to, beginning at chapter 36 verse 22 of the book of Ezekiel.

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I’m about to act, but for the sake of My holy name’.”

Now that means this—that whatever starts with grace ends up with glory.

“Which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the LORD God, when through you I vindicate My holiness before their eyes.”

What is the purpose for your salvation and my salvation according to those verses?

Participant: God’s glory.

Bruce: God’s glory! He’s going to vindicate His holiness and His great name by calling you and me to salvation by grace. And everything that you and I do after that salvation, answering our calling into grace, is going to be for His glory. Those are the means by which God in His sovereign grace has chosen to vindicate His holiness, to do that through you and me.

Now you talk about significance. You talk about meaning in life. Look at that. You and I, as a result of God’s grace, are the means by which He is going to demonstrate to a lost world that He is holy. He could have done that any way He chose to.. But He chose to do that through you and me.

Let’s continue on with what I mean by “going to glory.” Everything we do, because it starts with grace, is going to glory.

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Verse 24. *“I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”*

A heart of stone means that you’re not interested in spiritual things, and a heart of flesh is one that is now interested in spiritual things. He does that transformation for us.

And verse 27. *“And I will put My Spirit within you.”* And notice this. “And you have the choice to be obedient.” Is that what it says?

Participant: No.

Bruce: It doesn’t say that. It says this. *“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and be careful to obey My law.”*

Who takes responsibility for your and my obedience?

Participant: The Lord.

Bruce: God does. Now that does not mean that you and I don’t have responsibilities. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is, what is the source behind it? What is the motive behind it? It’s because you have the willingness to be willing now. You have the willingness to be willing. God gives you the willingness when He gave you saving faith through regeneration. Now you have a different desire. You have a willingness to want to be obedient. You may not be obedient all the time, but you have a willingness. Before that, you had no interest in it. Now you do, because it’s all of grace.

So we have God’s grace in everything that we do because whatever starts with God’s grace ends up in God’s glory. Your life now and my life is an expression of God’s glory, because He gives us the willingness to be willing to follow Him.

God is the reason for everything. Notice in verse 22. *“It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act.”* Do you realize, men, that you and I are never the reason that God does anything?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You talk about being humbled! You mean I’m not the reason? *(Laughter.)* The world doesn’t revolve around me? He says this. *“It is not for your sake.”* How about that! *“But for the sake of My holy name.”* And you are not even the reason for your salvation. Who is the reason for your salvation?

Participant: God.

Bruce: God is! It’s all of grace! Therefore, because it is all of grace—and we have God’s grace—we are going to glory. And everything we do in our lives is an expression of God’s glory because He gave us the grace in our salvation. It ends up in our glorification and the inheritance that we read about. But that’s the final glorification. In between, you and I are going to glory by the way that we live our lives.

That’s how you and I need to begin to look at and to think about suffering. So in the midst of suffering, what’s happening? God is being glorified because I’m going through the process of going to glory because I’ve been saved for God’s glory. We are never the reason God does anything. And men, you ought to be grateful for that, because if I were the reason for God to do something spiritual today, nothing would ever have eternal

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consequences. We are never the reason. God is the reason. It’s all of grace. We have His grace. And we are going to glory.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, sir?

Participant: If it didn’t work that way, would I be correct in thinking that if it wasn’t for God’s glory, then it would be dependent on my ability?

Bruce: Absolutely. God’s grace is the ability. Notice the acrostic—g-r-a-c-e—God’s resources at Christ’s expense. Who is the resource for us to be willing to be willing? God’s grace. He’s the resource behind that. He’s the reason behind it. He’s the resource. He’s the desire. He gives us the impulse, the desire to do this, and so it’s not left up to just you and me. That is by God’s grace that we’re going to glory.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Bruce: What is the difference between God’s grace and God’s forgiveness?

Bruce: His forgiveness is not holding our sins against us. Grace is giving us all that God is in Himself. The way that God gives us Himself is through His grace. Forgiveness is part of that. But what God does, the way that God shares His life with us, is through His grace. Grace is unmerited favor. You and I, do we deserve to be forgiven?

Participant: No.

Bruce: No. Are we forgiven?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Why is that?

Participant: Grace.

Bruce: Does God hold our sins against us?

Participant: No.

Bruce: Should He hold them against us?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: why doesn’t He do that? Because of grace.

Participant: amen.

Bruce: You see, the way that God gives Himself to us , all of the manifestations are that He does that through His grace. He’s the resource behind it. Ted, please?

Ted: I was looking at 1 Peter 1:24.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Ted: *“All flesh is like grass, and all it’s glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of God remains forever.”* I mean, it’s helpful for me to think about glory as being worth.

Bruce: Right. Worth.

Ted: So the fact of the matter is that we are all like, as it says in 1 Peter, All of us are like the flower that withers and falls away. That’s our weight. We have no substance.

Bruce: that’s right.

Ted: and God in His grace has given us more and more substance.

Bruce: Amen.

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Ted: Weight. We’re getting more and more glory. Glory is a hard word to nail down exactly, existentially. (*Unclear.*) I think it’s substance.

Bruce: Ted thinks—

Ted: Naturally, we have no substance.

Bruce: That’s correct. Therefore we have no value. Now Ted has brought up a good point about the word *glory* meaning weight. In Biblical times, the value of something was determined by it’s weight. And they would have a measuring system. So they put this element on one side of the scale, and this on the other side of the scale. And when it tipped down this way, the heavier one had more value. That’s the whole significance of the word *glory*. It’s about the weight that we have because you have more substance. Something that is heavier has greater weight because it has more--\

Men: Value.

Bruce: More value and substance. The more substance we have, the more value we have. And that’s the whole concept of glory. God gives us His grace so that everything we go through gives us more substance, gives us more weight. Therefore we have more value. And so Ted’s point is very well taken about the whole issue of glory, the weight and the substance that we have.

Now the reason that God is glorified is because we have no merit of our own. All that we have from God is of grace. And that is because we have no merit.

Why are we saved? God calls us to a saving relationship in order that He might derive glory for Himself by virtue of our being saved. That’s what we just read in Ezekiel chapter 36.

He who has called us to Himself by His grace will supply our need in grace until we are ushered into His eternal glory. That means this. The moment you are saved, everything in your life then is moving to glory. It just gets more glorified all the way. You become more valuable in God’s sight because of the resources He gives us in His grace. It ends up in our final glorification and the inheritance that we have that we read about in 1 Peter chapter 1. So we are going to glory all the time.

God’s eternal glory is involved in keeping a believer in salvation. It’s known as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Now I prefer to use the word *preservation* of the saints. Christ preserves us so that we persevere. Perseverance is an expression of something that happens inside of me. This willingness to persevere, where does it come from? God’s grace.

So am I being preserved? Yes, you’re being preserved by God’s grace in your salvation. That gives you the willingness to want to persevere. Now we don’t preserve ourselves. God is the source behind that. So it’s just a play on words. I prefer the expression *preservation of the saints*, because Jesus preserves us so that we can persevere. See how it works? It’s all of grace. That’s why we need to look at our lives as we go through suffering.

Salvation is by grace, and the sustaining of us is also by grace. If we have to depend upon grace when we suffer, that’s something which will result in what? God’s glory.

Let me give you that again. Here’s the attitude we need to have. We have grace. We’re going to glory. So when you and I depend upon God’s grace when we are

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suffering, that suffering will result in God’s glory. That’s why we are going to glory in everything we are going through, ending in our final inheritance. Do you see how that works?

Participant: Would you say that again, please?

Bruce: Because God gives us His grace, moment by moment, if we have the attitude of trusting His grace in the midst of suffering, it will end up in His glory. That means this—that if, moment by moment, as I’m going through suffering and trusting His grace, God is being glorified and I am going to glory in a different stage. That is receiving the glory. It ends up in our ultimate inheritance that we read about in 1 Peter chapter 1 that is reserved for us in heaven. But in the meantime we are going to glory moment by moment, step by step, until we reach that eternal glory in heaven. See how that works? It’s all-inclusive. It doesn’t just end in heaven. It starts now in our lives and culminates in heaven.

The road may be tough, but the road leads to glory. That’s the attitude we must have. The road leads to glory.

Number three for your consideration. Not only do we have God’s grace. Not only are we going to glory. Peter reminds us that *we are only going to suffer for a little while*.

Now this expression “a little while” is not wishful thinking or a petition, but it’s a prediction. It’s not wishful thinking; it’s a prediction.

Look at chapter 1 verse 6 of 1 Peter. *“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.”* There he says it’s for “a little while.” Trials are only for a season. But the results are always eternal. Suffering may be for a season, but the results are always eternal because they lead to—

Participant: Glory.

Bruce: glory. Do you see that everything about God is about His glory? Do you understand why we are saved? It’s about His glory. Do you understand why we go through suffering? It’s for His glory. Do you understand why He preserves us? It’s for His glory, so that we can persevere and God receives the glory. You see, everything that God does for us is for His glory. Trials are only for a season, but they will always result in the eternal.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. *“Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*

Who makes you willing to be willing?

Participant: Christ.

Bruce: God does. Do you understand that? God makes you willing to be willing. I now have the desire to be willing. I did not have that previous to my regeneration. Now I have it. And the reason is this—*“that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*

Now let’s read the rest of these verses. Here is the perfect description of normal Christian living. Now notice who is put on display here.

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” Now notice this in verse

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10. *“Always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus”*—a cause and effect relationship—*“so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.”*

When you and I understand God’s grace in the midst of suffering, who’s life is being put on display? Because you have a willingness to be willing to be obedient in the midst of your suffering and trust God’s grace in the midst of suffering, because you know that in the midst of suffering, God’s grace always leads to glory.

Verse 11. *“For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake.”* That means this. Life is going to take it’s toll on us. We’re going to die a little bit. But what comes out of us in the midst of this suffering? It’s the life of Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Christ puts His life on display *“to show that the all-surpassing power”* to survive, to persevere, to be preserved, comes from Him and not from us. *“For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh.”*

Now notice this wonderful summary statement about normal Christian living. You have to have the right attitude about grace and a great attitude about suffering. Here is the summary statement. *“So death is at work in us, but life in you.”*

You see, friends, when you and I understand grace in suffering, God is always putting His life on display. We just don’t know how that works, but we trust Him. So whenever you and I are trusting God’s grace in the midst of suffering, that suffering will always lead to God’s glory. Yes, Thomas?

Tom: Often, when we’re suffering, we think we’re alone, that God has abandoned us. That’s just the time that we need to be communicating with Him, praying to Him and fellowshiping with Him, you know? We say, “Stop the pain,” or “Heal me.” That’s the time to come together with Him.

Bruce: That’s a great point. Understand this. We need to fix our minds not on the situation, but on the Savior.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Put your mind not on the situation, but fix it on the Savior. Yes, sir?

Participant: Is suffering a blessing?

Bruce: Absolutely, it can be. You have to have the right attitude. That’s why we’re talking about understanding grace in the midst of suffering. It can be a blessing because it leads to what?

Participant: Glory.

Bruce: God’s glory. Therefore it’s a blessing.

The word *blessing* literally means an indication of your spiritual prosperity. In other words, when a person is blessed in the midst of suffering, you’re demonstrating your spiritual prosperity. You have a richness in your soul because of God’s grace. And through suffering we demonstrate the richness of our spiritual prosperity because of God’s grace in the midst of that. And God is glorified. Therefore we are the ones who are blessed.

Remember the Beatitude. *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”* It’s a blessing. Now do you understand that? Absolutely not. Can I logically

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figure that out? Not apart from God’s grace, I can’t. that is something that is just supernatural—for us to go through persecution and to be blessed through it? The reason that happens is because it leads to God’s glory. We are going to glory, men, moment by moment by moment. And we’re going to end up in eternal glory with our inheritance in heaven.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: What a great encouragement that is!

As a little boy once said to me, “Your face hurts me too.” (*Laughter.*)

I would say this also for our consideration. Not only do we have God’s grace. Not only are we going to glory, moment by moment. Not only do we suffer only for a little while to put God’s life on display. But also this. *We are being conformed to the image of Christ.*

Now notice in 1 Peter chapter 5. “*And after you have suffered a little while*”—and you hear, friends, what he has told us in chapter 1—“*the God of all grace.*” All of life is about grace! “*Who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore.*”

Now what does that word *restore* mean? It’s a very wonderful word. It was commonly used in Biblical times to mean the setting of a fracture. When a bone was broken, you reset it. You restored it.

Take a look at Mark 1 verse 19 and Matthew chapter 4 verse 21.

Transcriber’s Note” Mark 1:19. “*When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending their nets.*”

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 4:21 is virtually identical.

Bruce: The same word is used for mending a net. In other words, there was a hole in the net. It was fractured and they put it back together. They mended it. They restored it back to its original use.

The word *restore*, Biblically, means this. In our context, it means to supply that which is missing, to mend that which is broken, to restore that part which is lacking.

Now let me give you that again. He’s going to restore us. After we have suffered a little while, He, through His grace, is going to restore us. He’s going to supply that which is missing. He’s going to mend that which is broken. He’s going to restore that part which is lacking.

The predominant idea for us and the application for our lives is this. It is putting the parts into right relationship in connection with one another. That’s what you do when you put a broken bone together. You put the pieces back into right connection in relationship to each other. That’s what God is doing through our suffering for a little while.

So Peter is suggesting that by God’s grace He mends the lives of believers, thus equipping us to become more useful. What happens when you take a broken bone and reset it? It becomes more useful. That’s exactly what He does with the sufferings that we go through for a little while. He’s going to restore us to make us more useful.

That in itself is a blessing! Do you see that? It’s a blessing that He’s restoring us.

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Suffering was meant by God to add the grace notes of His life. He adds more grace to us. Now God has several tools which He uses to restore us, and suffering is one of them. Take a look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Timothy 3:16-17. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”*

Bruce: The word of God is another way in which He does it. Notice what He says in verse 17. *“Fully and thoroughly equipped.”* Go to 2 Timothy 3:16.

“All Scripture is breathed by God.” What I’m suggesting, men, is that His primary tools for doing this in our lives—blessing us and conforming us to the image of Christ—are through suffering and through His word.

2 Timothy 3:16. *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness”—a cause and effect relationship—“so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* That’s how we are being conformed to the image of Christ. He uses suffering as a means of that—only for a little while—but He also uses the Word as the other means to restore the grace notes of His life.

Look at Ephesians chapter 4, verses 11-16.

Transcriber’s Note: Ephesians 4:11-16. *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

Bruce: He actually uses the fellowship and the ministry of the local church as a means of doing that. The fellowship and ministry of the local church is one of the ways in which God conforms us to the image of His Son.

You see, all of life is about our going to glory. He uses all these things in our lives to conform us to the image of His Son, because if death occurs in us, what comes out of us? The life of Christ, as we saw in 2 Corinthians 4:7. Yes, we may die a little bit, but what comes out of us? *“The all-surpassing power comes from Him and not from us.”* He wants to put Christ’s life on display, and therefore He is going to have to do what to us? Conform us to the image of that which is going to be put on display. He uses suffering for a little while. He’ll use the Word. And He’ll use the fellowship and the ministry of the local church to conform us to the image of His Son. So as you and I go through suffering for a little while for His glory, Christ’s life is being put on display. Do you see how that works? Are you with me on all this?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: How about Hebrews chapter 13, verses 20 and 21?

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Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 13:20-21. *“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Bruce: Our Lord in heaven is perfecting His children to do His will and to do His work. A good cross reference is Hebrews 13:20-21. He is working in us to do His will and to do His work. Who makes us willing?

Men: God.

Bruce: God makes us willing. We have the willingness to be willing because of God’s grace. So what is our attitude about God’s grace in suffering? First of all, we have God’s grace. Secondly, we are going to glory. We will suffer only for a while. And we are being conformed to the image of Christ.

Specifically, how are we conformed to the image of Christ? By the application of grace in suffering.

Let’s take a look at some of the applications of God’s grace in our suffering. We talked about what our attitude is about God’s grace in suffering. Now let us take a look at our understanding of God’s application.

A couple things I want to offer for your consideration. First of all, this. *He supplies that which is missing.* The way in which He conforms us to Christ is to supply what is missing in our characters through suffering. He supplies what is missing.

So if we accept suffering with humility and trust, it can add to what we are lacking in our lives to help us to be conformed to the image of His Son. It all starts with our attitude, the attitude that we have toward grace in suffering. It can repair the weaknesses and add to the greatness.

There’s a lot of theory that leads from strength. Personally, I think it’s more important to lead from weakness.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because when you’re weak, you’re going to be more on your knees than you are when leading by strength.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: If I lead by my strength with what I have, I might be abusive. But if I understand my weaknesses, I understand this—that He will supply what is missing in my life through His grace. If you understand what it means to be weak, you’ll be more prayerful in trusting Him in His grace more, to refine you.

So He will balance that out. He will add what is lacking and balance that which you already have.

Secondly, *he solidifies that which we have.* Not only does he supply that which is missing, but He also solidifies that which we have. And that is the second verb that we have in 1 Peter chapter 5. *“Restore, confirm, strengthen and establish.”*

The words *make strong* or *establish* is to set up a solid foundation, solid as granite. It means to create a foundation, a solid foundational structure. Suffering of body and sorrow of heart will do one of two things to a person. It will make him collapse, or come

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out with a more solid character that he would never gain any place else. Either you’ll come out with a stronger foundation, or you’re going to collapse. God says that He will strengthen us in that.

We already possess character qualities which will be solidified or strengthened. That which you have He’s going to refine. He’s going to replace that which is lacking. But He’s also going to solidify that which you have. In other words, He’s going to help you to use them correctly. You may have certain influences and instructions of God’s grace in your life. He’s going to help you use them more wisely. He’ll solidify those so that you will not become abusive, creating balance in our lives.

Number three would be this. *He strengthens that which we will use.* He supplies that which is missing by His grace. He solidifies that which we have by His grace. And He strengthens that which we will use.

What good is it to have a good foundation if you’re not strong enough to use it? What’s the use of having a good solid foundation if you don’t have the grace and the strength to use it? Not only does God solidify what we have, but He will also strengthen what you use so you’ll use it correctly.

We don’t use everything all the time. Just as a life of no exercise produces a flabby body, so a life with no trials or tests creates a weak faith. He will strengthen that which we already have. If you have a faith that is weak, He’s going to strengthen that.

And lastly, *He settles that which we have used.* He supplies, solidifies, strengthens, and now He settles that which we have used. The word *steadfast* means to lay a foundation.

Hebrews chapter 1 verse 10. *“In the beginning, O LORD, You laid the foundations of the earth.”* God is laying a foundation in your life just like He laid a foundation at the beginning of the world. When He recreated you as a new person in Christ, He laid you a new foundation.

Matthew chapter 7 refers to another foundation. Chapter 7, verses 24-27.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 7:24-27. *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Bruce: The house founded on the rock withstood the storm. God is creating a foundation within you because He is settling that which we have used.

Colossians 1:23.

Transcriber’s Note: Colossians 1:23. *“If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”*

Bruce: a believer who is equipped by God will continue in the faith, grounded and settled. He creates a foundation, but He’s going to settle it.

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When you lay a foundation of concrete or cement, what do you have to let it do? You’ve got to let it settle. That’s what He’s going to do in our lives. He’s going to create a foundation of grace in our lives. But He’s going to let that settle and become a stronger foundation, so we will not be blown by every wind that comes down the road.

The result is this. *“We will not be tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind of doctrine.”* Ephesians 4:14. Because you’ll be settled.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Suffering doesn’t always result in these precious things with every person. Suffering will drive a person to bitterness or resentment or despair. But if we accept God’s suffering with the right attitude of trusting His grace, from a sovereign God who supplies what you don’t have, solidifies what you do have, strengthens that which you use and settles that which you just used, the result will be that God will receive the glory.

When an unbeliever goes through suffering, he loses his hope. But for a believer, suffering increases our hope. Look at Romans chapter 5. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. Don Bishop and I were talking about that on the way over.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Don: And we were talking about persecution, or the loss of a loved one, or illness, or whatever. Our only hope is glory.

Bruce: Amen.

Don: And the unbeliever doesn’t have that. This is all he has. But our hope is glory.

Bruce: amen to that. In Ephesians 2 Paul says this. He describes the nonbeliever as *“without hope,”* because they don’t know God—without God and with no hope. You see, when you have God, you have—

Men: Hope.

Bruce: And when you don’t have God, you don’t have hope.

Go to Romans chapter five, as we conclude. Remember, Peter says this—to stand firm in the grace you’ve been given. Listen to this about hope. We begin in chapter 5 verse 1.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

What a wonderful summary statement!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: *“We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.”*

Men, when you and I go through suffering, we need to understand this. That is just one of the means by which God in His sovereign grace is conforming us to the image of Christ, so that life becomes a step-by-step process to glory. May it be so that we have the right understanding and attitude about grace in our suffering.

Let’s pray. Father, there is much that we’ve gleaned from you this morning. Forgive us if we said things that are inferior to what You have intended us to learn. May Your

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Holy Spirit guide us into all truth. Father, thank You for the great, great gift of grace. Lord, we understand that all of life is grace. And help us and remind us moment by moment, Lord, that whatever you started with grace, always ends up in Your glory. And may it be so, that You would be glorified by our means today, as You give us the willingness to be willing to be obedient, for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen.”