

Gripped by the Gospel of Grace Pt 2 -- The True Grace of God

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Date: 31 July 2022

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[0 : 00] Okay, so today we're going to finish up our vision series. So we're going to do the last chapter of 1 Peter. And this is a great opportunity to just say this together one more time.

Can we put it up there? Okay, let's say it together. This is our vision. A community of contrast, gripped by the gospel of grace, sharing Christ with our city.

So we close the series in the same place that we began, which is gripped by the gospel of God's grace. The gospel of grace isn't just the beginning and end of the series, though.

It's the beginning and end of all that God does in and through us. So I'm just going to define these terms really quickly. Grace is God's favor towards us.

It's his desire to rescue us, to come and find us, despite the fact that we've rebelled against him. And the gospel is the message of how God accomplished that rescue. He did it through Jesus.

[1 : 04] And without the gospel of grace, there's no other part of this vision statement that makes sense. There's no community of contrast without the gospel. There's no sharing Christ with others without the gospel.

And without the good news of the gospel, we're cut off from God. We're floundering. We're in a place of fear and failure. But we have been gripped by the gospel of grace.

And God has taken it and given it to his church. And he said, here it is. This is your treasure. This is your task. This is the message. This is the means by which my grace is going to spread to every corner of your heart and every corner of the world.

It's the delight that drives Christian duty. And so it's going to be a joy for us to trace the path of it through 1 Peter. And part of what I'm going to talk about tonight is the fact that there is a path. There's an order. There's a life cycle. There's a way that the gospel of grace works in us. So if you're a triathlete, are you a triathlete?

[2 : 14] No. Don't worry. I have a metaphor for you in a moment if you're not. So if you're a triathlete, first you have to swim. This is what I've been told. I have never done a triathlon.

Then you have to bike. And then you have to run. It always goes in that order. If it doesn't go in that order, it's not a triathlon. If you want cookies, is this cookies?

Yes? Okay. This is everyone's speed. If you want cookies, first you have to mix, right? You have to make a batter. Then you have to form it. Then you have to bake it. There's an order. It doesn't work. And I think there's something similar that happens with the gospel of grace.

So if you've been gripped by the gospel of God's grace, first you're going to have to embrace humility. Humility, that's the first thing that happens. Humility, weakness, first step.

Then you're going to suffer. No, it's not a popular message. But that's the second thing that happens, is that God leads us from weakness and humility into suffering in his gospel.

[3 : 18] And finally, you must be glorified. That's the third part. And this is what Peter reminds us about today. It's what he calls the true grace of God in 1 Peter chapter 5.

And so we're going to follow this path together. We're going to talk about grace in humility and grace in suffering and grace in glory. If any of us are conscious and not, you know, passed out by the end.

So we don't have Bibles down here, which is really sad. But I'll do my best to read the scriptures to you, and you can listen or you can look it up on your phone if you want to. So 1 Peter chapter 5.

So the theme of humility is what launches chapter 5. So the chapter begins with all these instructions to the church leaders. And it says, you guys have to be examples. You have to be eager.

You have to be generous in your service. Because you are under shepherds. You're accountable to the chief shepherd, who is Jesus. And that's where we started in verse 4 with the chief shepherd. And the chief shepherd promises glory to all those that complete the course, that complete the race. [4 : 24] So the call to humility starts with the church's leadership. And then he says this is also a model for how the younger are to approach their elders in the church. And he says it's a standard for everyone in God's church.

So he says this. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another. Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another.

So from the top of the community all the way to the bottom, we wrap ourselves in humility. So if you had to put on a robe to answer the door, that's like wrapping yourself in humility.

And it's an interesting image that humility is the thing that buffers our relationships in the church. It's what's in between all of us. But I have to tell you something. And that's that in the Roman world, humility was a dirty word.

It was an insult. So if you wanted to really put someone down, you would say they were humble. And it's kind of the other meaning of the word, right? Someone that's pathetic. Someone that's needy.

[5 : 23] Someone that's weak. This is what you would say about slaves or someone that was really poor, really out of sorts. That they're humble. And so humility goes a lot deeper than just kind of waving off a compliment and pretending like you're fine.

Humility is about wrapping ourselves in weakness in the way that we relate to one another. I'm going to try something because we're in this hall and I think that you might enjoy it.

And that's, would you guys like to take a moment and just share with your neighbor about this? All right. I want you to just, just turn to your neighbor and say, what would it look like in our community if we wrapped ourselves in weakness?

What would that mean? Try it. Let's go. Okay. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. Your minute is up. That was wonderful. I loved hearing, I loved hearing the buzz there.

And I would love to know what all of you are saying. We're going to keep plowing forward. Okay. So my visual for this idea of wrapping yourself in weakness would be groups like AA or NA.

[6 : 37] And I think they have it right with this, where at the beginning of every meeting you would start and you would say, hello, my name is Ben. I'm an alcoholic. That's how you wrap yourself in weakness, at least one way. And it's not surprising that programs like that have Christian origins, is it?

The reason is that this sort of disposition, it's not natural. It's not natural for me to approach another person in weakness. I always want to come and bring my strength and put it in front of me, in between us. But it comes from being grounded in God.

It comes from being grounded in the reality that we are sinners saved by grace. Being comfortable with that being our identity. And so humility, in the community of contrast that God is making us into, it begins in our relationship with God.

It doesn't begin by wanting to be humble or by trying to be humble. It begins in our relationship with God. It grows out of being gripped by the gospel. And the way that 1 Peter says it is, God opposes the proud and he gives grace to the humble.

And I think you could think of this principle as like the law of gravity in the Bible. It's inescapable. You can't get away from it. It's everywhere in the Bible. That humility and weakness and poverty, that's the soil where God works.

[7 : 51] That's where he meets people. That's the place that we meet Christ. That's where grace looks like good news, is when we realize that we're low and we need it. God said it like this in Isaiah.

This is from our first reading. I dwell in the high and holy place. And also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit. To revive the spirit of the lowly.

To revive the heart of the contrite. In other words, if you're looking for God, if you want to find out where God is, he's in two places for sure. He's in unapproachable, magnificent glory in a place that you can't get to, by yourself at least.

And he's also with the humble and the weak. And that's the place that we already are. So that's very good news for us. So if by God's mercy we come to see our neediness, our humility, our weakness, that's the place that God dwells.

He's waiting there to revive us. And I think it's, like I said, it's not that we need to be humble. It's that we are humble. We already are humble. We're helpless.

[9:02] We need God's rescue. And so we're gripped by the gospel in weakness. And he commands it in verse 6. He says, Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hands, that he may lift you up in due time.

So, God's mighty hand. I don't know what image you have in your head. But this is from the book of Exodus, this image. And every time Exodus uses it, it speaks of God redeeming and rescuing his people, reaching out his hand.

And he is reaching out and he's splitting the sea. And he's giving manna to his people. And he's creating whirlwinds and pillars of fire. And so, we don't cower before God's mighty hand.

That's not what this image is. This image is a hand that reaches out to save people. And we throw ourselves into his hands. That's what it means to humble ourselves under his mighty hand.

Verse 7 says, Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. And it's not a separate command. It's part of that same idea. This is the way that we humble ourselves as we grow in the gospel.

[10:09] We humble ourselves by throwing our anxieties and our worry on the mighty hand of God that saves. On the one who cares for us. So, I don't know about your anxieties.

Mine are all about control. So, it's knowing, looking at the world that is kind of scary and big and a lot of change. And knowing my own weakness.

And then trying to come up with plans and contingency plans. And maybe I can mitigate my fragility. And sometimes I feel like I'm just locked in a mental escape room. Do you know what an escape room is?

Like you have to solve the puzzle to get out. And it can feel like that with anxiety. That if we just look around for clues and we solve the puzzle, maybe we can find a way out. But what this passage is saying is that that is a prison of my own making.

And right at the heart of the gospel is the reality that God stands ready to take my weakness and lift me up by his mighty hand. That I don't need to figure it out myself. And that's why the command to humble ourselves is we're given a way to do it.

[11:17] The ongoing way to do it is by casting our cares on him in prayer. Over and over. Daily, as Andrew was saying. Trusting his provision. Trusting his saving ability.

Continuing to give him those anxieties. And waiting on him. The gospel grows in our hearts as we can do this. And not just recognize our weakness. But in a sense, celebrate it.

Because it's the way that God is saving us. So often in my Christian life, I've asked myself, am I strong enough? Am I strong enough to do what God is asking me to do?

I can't do it. I'm not strong enough. I think that's absolutely backwards. The real question is, am I weak enough? Am I weak enough to cast my anxieties upon him and let his mighty hand deliver me?

Weakness is the way. And the next point, we're going to need to be very weak for the next point. Which is grace in suffering.

[12:17] So I'm going to read the next couple of verses to you. Be alert. And of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him. Standing firm in the faith. Because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. So, God's mighty hand grips us by the gospel, leads us from humility into suffering.

It doesn't, it's not where I would expect him to save me to. But the normalcy of suffering is one of the major concerns of this book. Over and over, Peter brings it up.

This is normal. This is normal. This is normal. Persecution, for Christ's sake, isn't a flaw. It's a feature. And he says the whole family of believers, of Christians, are in it with us together.

So back in chapter 4, Peter wrote this to try to hammer this point home. He said, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

[13:25] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. Don't be surprised when you suffer for Christ.

It's expected. Now, we've got to be careful here. Peter isn't addressing all human suffering. So the suffering that you have in this hot room listening to this sermon isn't the fiery trial.

The fiery trial, it may feel like the fiery trial. The fiery trial, no. The fiery trial is specifically suffering for Christ, suffering because we are following Christ. He goes, in chapter 4, he spends a long time saying, Now, if you're suffering because, you know, you did something, you broke the law, and you went to jail, and you're acting wickedly, like, that's not what I'm talking about.

No, he's talking about us following Christ, choosing to follow him, living according to his commands, living righteously, and being abused for seeking to honor Christ, seeking to be faithful.

And the central question that he's trying to address here, that he's really after over and over in this book is, if it's true that I'm in God's mighty hands, that he's scooped me up and is saving me from danger, why is he allowing this to happen to me?

[14:44] Why? Why suffering? So, we took a stand for the gospel as a church.

Why did we lose our building? Why did, why don't, where is God when that happens? Many people I know say, I've given up career opportunities, I've given up relationships, and money, and time.

Why hasn't God rewarded me? Why is my life so difficult? I try to do the right thing, and I'm mocked, and excluded. And the temptation is to think that it's evidence that we've somehow gotten the gospel wrong, right?

That's what he's addressing here. They're questioning, if God is letting these things happen to us, do we really have the gospel? Is he really saving us? Is he really living up to his promises? And Peter's point is, you're not suffering despite your faithfulness, you're suffering because of it.

It's expected. Now, the suffering that's inflicted on Christians, it's not good. It's evil. And yet, Peter's clear, it's also given to us by the hand of God.

[16:02] It's allowed. It's the will of God that we experience it, it says earlier in the book. And so, because of that, we're to rejoice, because it means that we are united with Christ in it.

That somehow, we're experiencing and growing in him more deeply by the suffering that God is leading us through as we lean on him in our weakness. Now, this is a little bit, this is a little bit more dicey in terms of, in terms of vulnerability, but I gave you one question to warm up.

So, I wonder if you want to take just a minute and, and just say something to your neighbor about what this might be stirring up in you. you know, is there, is there something that you're facing right now or, or something that this makes you think of that you'd like to share?

So, I'll give you a minute and, you can do it. Go ahead. Okay. I've, I've, I've, I've drunk all the water in my bottle, so now that means it's time.

Thanks for sharing with each other. You guys, listen, it's hot. We gotta, I don't know, we gotta lean in. I don't know what to say. Okay, so when we're walking a Christ-shaped life, we're walking a cross-shaped life.

[17:28] That's what we've been talking about. God leads us into suffering. And, chapter five gives us two commands to help us navigate this, to help us do it. What should we be thinking about when we're facing this suffering?

What should, how should we do it? And the first is verse eight. And it says, be alert and be sober. And this is having awareness of the potential danger that we're facing in this situation that God has us in.

It says, our enemy Satan stalks like a roaring lion that would devour us. And I have a very silly story to illustrate this for you. So, buckle up. So, once I was rock climbing and I got about 20 feet up and it was a challenging route and I was lead climbing so the rope's below you and you're lifting it up and clipping it in as you go.

And so, I got a little bit nervous and I looked down at my belay just to make sure that I was safe and my belay had a rope in one hand and in the other hand he had a sandwich.

And he was eating the sandwich. He didn't just have the sandwich, he was eating the sandwich.

And I said, dude, because I was 17 and that's what I said when I was 17.

[18:40] And he said, bro, I got you. I got you, bro, I got you. And I was like, you don't. Put the sandwich down. And I know that's very silly, but this is kind of what Peter's trying to communicate.

He's saying, Christians, put the sandwich down. Look around. Keep your wits. Be aware. This is not a place to play around. The enemy could swallow you whole in this moment of suffering.

It's easy to slip. So, alertness and sobriety is the posture that Christians ought to have. The second command, though, is that we're not just to be aware that we're in a dangerous situation, we're actually to resist Satan.

It says, resist him by standing firm in the faith. So, how do we do that? Well, we stand firm by knowing that weakness and suffering first of all are not the absence of grace rather than an opportunity for God's hand to work.

So, we remain alert but not afraid. We say, God has led me here. He will sustain me through it. God is leading me through suffering. Good. That's what he promised.

[19 : 54] It's what every Christian past, present, and future must face. And by faith and in Christ, I'm still firmly in his hand. And Satan can only devour or swallow up a person when we slide from the true faith into a false gospel, which is why Peter is saying, stand in the true gospel if we slide away from it.

Most, particularly, probably a prosperity type of gospel. So, this would be the amount of belief, there's the belief that the amount of ease or abundance or the, you know, if things are going well in my life, that means God is showing me favor.

And if things are not going well, that means I'm far from God or he's not showing me favor. That's the prosperity gospel. And when we step into that, we're sliding, we're not standing firm in the faith. So, to resist the evil one, we stand firm where it's safe, in the mighty hand of God, which is Jesus' saving work for the weak, which is Jesus' cross, the cross-shaped life that we walk.

But, there is good news here. It ends in God's faithfulness to us. It ends in glory. And that's the final point, is grace and glory. And so, this is the kind of benediction that he gives in verse 10.

[21 : 08] And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Only the God of all grace would meet us in humility, in our weakness, grab a hold of us, lead us through danger, and bring us into eternal glory. God is the one who dwells in the high and lofty place, but has called us to his side.

He's come down to our place in Christ to revive the contrite and lowly, and now he's leading us by his mighty hand through suffering into his place, into his fullness.

holiness. The end of the gospel of grace, this life cycle, this path, it always has the same end. The end is always dwelling with God in glory. That's the end. Being gripped by the gospel is being gripped into a glorious and future hope.

It comes after we've suffered a little while, which doesn't mean that our suffering is short, unfortunately. What it's trying to do is place this context of difficulty in perspective, saying it's really short when you compare it to eternity.

[22 : 24] Our trials now are a blip compared to what God has called us into. I think that, I don't know if you agree, I think the idea of dwelling in God's eternal glory is very difficult to understand as a concept.

The most concrete example we have of this journey is Jesus, because Jesus suffered on the cross even though he was innocent and good. And he rose in victory in a new body and he ascended to his father so he went to glory.

But what that place and experience is like is very metaphorical and poetic, isn't it? It exceeds our imaginations. So the New Testament calls it, it talks about mansions and says there's a place there for us.

It's called the New Jerusalem with streets of gold. There's no tears, there's no pain, there's no death. It's moving from a dim mirror not being able to see to full sight.

But the word Peter uses is eternal glory which is God's weight and presence in his fullness. And what I think is very interesting is that Peter doesn't close by describing God's glory and what it's going to be like there.

[23 : 32] He actually describes how you and I are going to be furnished to be in that place. So as God brings us to his side, he also finishes the work that he started, the work that he's doing now.

And so he uses four words to talk about that. He says he will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. So restoring is making us whole.

And this is a Greek word that's used of mending a broken bone. So I have a broken finger so I can relate to this one. So in eternity, God is going to take any part of us that's out of joint.

And this is metaphorical, right? So you can look inside and think all the parts of me that are out of joint. Whether through injury, various damages, illnesses, and difficulties we face, God is going to take those things and set them so that they're healed and they're right.

That's what restoring us. To confirm us is to strengthen us in our faith. And so this is where faith becomes sight. And so this is where our disposition shifts from suffering and weakness and faith and hope now to certainty.

[24 : 45] It's seeing it complete. It's seeing the reality of it finished. That's what confirmed means. Our faith is not hope in a future thing. It's happened. To strengthen us is to give us power to stand.

So we've spent a lot of time, or I've spent a lot of time talking about weakness, leaning on faith, leaning in faith on God from a place of poverty. But God, in this passage, says one day, you're not going to lean on me because you're weak.

I'm going to have made you strong. Which is amazing to imagine. And finally, he says, we'll be established. And this is a word that speaks about a building's foundation.

It's a construction term. And so, we'll no longer be rootless, homeless. the book of Peter talks about being exiles that are longing for home.

And he says, in that day, in the day of glory, you're not going to be exiles, you're going to be home. You're living stones that are built right into God's house. You're part of it.

[25 : 52] You belong. You belong. The very point of all of these promises is that we are not these things now. Now, we have broken bones.

Now, our sight is dim. We're weak. We're exiles. We're longing for those things. But the worst things are, the better those promises become for us.

We are elect exiles. That means called. Called from a place of humility, through suffering, into glory, by God's grace that has been revealed to you in the gospel, which is how God, by his grace, has gripped us and is continuing to grip us as he saves us by his mighty hand.

So, this is the true grace of God, my friends. Stand firm in it. Amen.