

Romans 5 - Experience Grace

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Turn with me this morning to Romans chapter 5. Romans 5. The text will be on the screen behind me or in the Bible in the pews in front of you.
- It's on page 942. 942. The new year is a great time to examine some of your core commitments, your fundamental priorities, things that are most important to you as a person and as a church as well.
- As a church that seeks to see God's kingdom advance, that's our vision, Southwood's particular mission is to experience and express grace.
- If you've been here a little while, you've probably heard that or read that. Hopefully you've seen this slide on the screens around the building. To experience and express grace.
- [1 : 0 6] That's what we want to be about. That's a catchy mission statement, right? Experience and express grace. But having a mission statement is only helpful if we actually know what we mean by that.
- And that's really important, not merely because a church made this its mission statement, but because this is actually the way God designed for all of us to live.
- We're going to see that this morning. Individually and corporately, those two pistons firing together is God's heart for the people He created to fill the earth with His glory.
- Experience grace and express grace. I mentioned earlier during the announcements that next weekend is our Express Grace Conference where we're going to talk for the weekend about what it can look like when God's grace transforms us so that His heart flows through us to others, right?
- Express grace. So I thought this morning we would look for a few minutes at what we mean when we say experience grace. How would I know if I've experienced it?
- [2 : 1 8] How often does that happen? What difference does it make to be a person or to be a part of a church that is regularly experiencing grace?
- What does that even mean? There are a lot of angles we could take on that, a lot to say about it. But this morning I want to look at Romans 5 as our starting point. We'll just read the first two verses now and then talk about the experience of God's grace together from this great passage and others.
- God's holy word in Romans 5 where Paul has just been talking about the righteousness of God that comes to sinful people. They receive it by faith.
- And then he says this, 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 hope of the glory of God.

[3 : 23] Thus far God's holy word. Let's pray and ask for His help as we study it together. Father, Father, we come to You as we love to do because You love to show us Jesus in Your Word.

You love to make our hearts see our need of You. You love to teach us by Your Spirit. And so we come as those who need to learn again this morning, who need to know You more, to love You more, to serve You more.

And we ask that as You meet with us this morning, You would change us. That we would not be the same. That we would see Jesus as more glorious. And we would love Him more.

Would You do that in each of our hearts? We ask for His sake. Amen. About this time two years ago, as Southwood was entering a season of transition, we learned together from the book of Ephesians that what we needed as a church was not a new pastor, but a renewed vision of the glory of God and of the incredible dimensions of His love for us in Jesus.

About this time last year, as I was about to become that new pastor Southwood didn't need, which was a little awkward, we talked about our ongoing need for Jesus.

[5 : 03] Not me, not a new program, but for Jesus. And we said that grace was best understood not as an abstract theological concept, but rather as a person.

That experiencing grace meant our constant needs, constantly being met in Christ. So I'll let you in on a little secret this morning for this sermon.

This is basically that same sermon. It's all about Jesus. And we hear that every week from every page of Scripture. But this week, as we talk about experiencing grace from Romans 5, God is reminding us again that it is all about Jesus.

That all of His Word, all of our mission, what He's called us to. I wanted to tell you that while that glorious melody of fairest Lord Jesus was still in your heads.

Because it needs to stay in our heads. It needs to stay there. It needs to work its way from our heads to our hearts that we would actually see Jesus as fairest, as most beautiful and glorious.

[6 : 17] You see, if Jesus isn't beautiful and glorious to us, and if we aren't desperate for His presence and power in us and through us, then I can yell and scream and hire staff and build playgrounds and fund budgets and write mission statements.

But if Jesus isn't beautiful and glorious to us, and if we're not desperate for His presence with us and His power in us and through us, we might as well shut the doors.

We might as well stop pretending. We will still be missing God's heart for us. We'll still be failing to advance God's kingdom as He has called us to, if we're not desperate for Jesus.

Just notice in Romans 5 how Paul shows us we have experienced grace one way, and one way only, and that is through Jesus. All the blessings we have, we don't deserve, they're inextricably linked to who He is and what He has done for us.

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 hope of the glory of God.

[7 : 46] Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him. That's how it is that we have grace. Notice all of it.

Everything that happens in there, we're going to talk about these glorious gifts that we have. Everything in these two verses. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him. None of it comes to us any other way.

It's through Him. That's Paul's point later in this chapter when he talks about sin and death coming through one man, Adam, and grace and life coming through one man, Jesus.

Look at verse 17. I think it's on the next slide. For if because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification in life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous.

[9 : 04] This is that beautiful section where Paul is talking about Jesus as the second Adam. Adam has done this in his sin, his disobedience, and we've all become sinners as we follow from him.

But in Christ, something entirely different. There's so much rich theology just in this one chapter, but just realize for a second what Paul is saying Jesus has single-handedly done for us.

This is grace, y'all. These are the things we get that we could never earn for ourselves. He has secured our right standing with God.

Justified by faith. Peace with God. For a rebel like me who failed to keep God's holy law and could never do enough to be declared innocent, much less righteous, Jesus takes my sin on the cross and he gives me his perfect righteousness, justification.

That's the big word we use for that. Picture the courtroom where God is the judge sitting behind the bench and he's reviewing my rap sheet.

[10 : 22] All of the things I've done and failed to do and he's prepared to issue the guilty verdict and the death penalty is coming to me until Jesus steps in and takes my punishment, pays my penalty, and I'm declared not guilty.

Even righteous. Perfectly righteous. Justified before God. But it's more than just that, isn't it? Grace says this.

It's not just that I'm declared not guilty and perfectly righteous. The judge jumps down from behind the bench. He grabs my hand and he walks me down the hallway of the courthouse to family court.

And he walks in there and he throws off his robe and he's wearing a shirt that says, Proud Dad. And he walks into my adoption proceedings and says, I want this one to be mine.

Adoption. Jesus has secured for us the Father's love. That access that verse 2 is talking about is the access of a son to a father.

[11 : 32] Can you believe that? It's not just that you're not facing death for your sin anymore. It's that the God of the universe would want to adopt the death row convict as his own beloved son.

He wants us sitting at his dinner table. Sitting in his lap and talking to him. Jesus has assured us of the Father's love and adoption.

Jesus has empowered us to live for God's glory. Previously, we only cared about our own glory, right? This is sanctification. That's the word we use for it.

What he does in our lives in an ongoing way. He gives us a new heart and he dwells within me by his spirit so that, as Paul says here, grace and life might reign in the place of sin and death.

I'm directed by a new authority. I'm governed by new desires, Paul says. I'm a new person because of Jesus. And finally, of course, there's glorification.

[12 : 40] Had to see how many Asian words we could get in in one sermon. Jesus has guaranteed our eternal inheritance as well. That's the hope of the glory of God that verse 2 says we rejoice in.

That one day, someday, I will be changed into the image of his son, God, perfect, and I'll be with him forever. I was the guy with no future, no hope.

There was nothing to look forward to. Facing the penalty for my sin, but now I have a glorious future that can't be taken away. No one can steal it from me in Christ.

All of that. All of that. That we have in Jesus. None of it we ever could have earned for ourselves. It's all of grace.

It comes through one man. Jesus Christ. That's not merely the message of Romans chapter 5. That's the heart of the Bible. Grace and Jesus.

[13 : 49] All the things we get that we don't earn are inextricably linked to him because he earned them. Justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification.

Every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians chapter 1. Jesus comes full of grace and truth and from the fullness of his grace, we've all received grace upon grace.

One blessing after another. John chapter 1. So that it's always the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that's over and over said to be with you all.

So that we can be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2. That's where it's found. It's not anywhere else.

Because if we abide in Jesus, if Jesus is living in us, if we're abiding in him, Jesus himself tells us, John chapter 15, we will bear much fruit.

[14 : 55] But apart from him, we can do what? Nothing. Apart from me, Jesus says, you can do nothing. So for us as a church, that's what experience grace means.

That we have one hero. One perfect Savior. One in whom we hope. And so the rest of us are death row convicts upon whom the Father has poured his grace to overflowing.

It's easy in a church to start thinking we need gifted people. We need spiritual superstars. The good looking family.

The members with money. God would remind us this morning that we are all grace beggars. Hopeless without it.

Bankrupt on our own. Completely dependent on Jesus. That's the one other thing about grace that I want us to see this morning in this passage.

[16 : 05] You'll notice in verse 1, that for people trusting in Christ, Paul says there is grace in their past. They have been justified.

Jesus has come, and through his life, death, and resurrection, he's made us right with God. And when he came and lived and died and rose, he has obtained for us access to the Father.

You'll see there's also grace in our future. That's where we're rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. Future grace. But the thing I want us to see, especially this morning, there's a unique reminder that I think is the heart of the passage, and it's the heart of our mission.

What we really mean when we say we're experiencing grace, and that is its present value. This is the grace that we need today.

The grace in which we stand. Today. And continually. This is what Paul's talking about.

[17 : 16] This is what we've obtained. What we've gotten access to through the Father is we have grace in which we stand. Grace is what we need.

What we must have to stand before God today. Moment by moment. Because God has designed us for relationship with Him.

To live in constant dependence upon Him. Abiding in Jesus. Never weaning off of Jesus. That's God's heart in creation and in redemption.

People who constantly experience grace. Not just one time in their past. Not just one day to look forward to in their future. But what we're talking about when we say in our mission statement to experience grace is today.

Again, today I need to experience grace. To live moment by moment in need of Jesus. Standing only in Him.

[18 : 16] No other way. Let me see if I can explain what I mean with a medical example. Some Christians, in fact, many of us, tend to live as though they need Jesus like a vaccination.

He was really important when they first received Him in the past. And He'll protect them from things in the future. He'll protect me from hell and maybe some other bad things along the way.

But my deep need of grace was back there in the past when I needed that. It's something I got already when I got vaccinated. Sometimes Christians tend to live as though they need Jesus like a vitamin.

They show up regularly because they need their weekly dose of grace. Their dose of Jesus. It's important to my health and my life.

It just makes me feel well-rounded. And perhaps some of us even need daily vitamins. When we remember to get them, they build us up and make us stronger. And we need to go and learn of Jesus and read and be with Him even daily.

[19 : 30] It kind of builds me up a little extra. But in both of those scenarios, we're talking about getting grace. Like it's a vaccination or a vitamin.

Something we can just get. You know, I get grace. You've said that maybe before. I get grace. I've had that. But grace is a person.

So it's a person with whom we always need relationship. Not an item we get enough of. Or a concept that we master.

Grace is a person. So we live in relationship with Jesus. You know, the Bible presents Jesus to us not as a vaccination.

Not as a vitamin. But as oxygen. If oxygen were a person, what kind of relationship would you need with him?

[20 : 29] Kind of a decent one? A close one? Would you need to talk with him often? Would you live regularly in dependence on them? Would you need to see him some? That's how the Bible depicts our need for Jesus.

Spiritually speaking, we need Jesus desperately. We don't stand for one moment apart from him. And that's not something we're trying to grow out of.

It's not something we hope changes next week when you all get back and have things figured out. That's God's grand design. That we have that close, essential relationship with him.

That's what he wants for us. That's his goal, not the starting point. We believe we can't stand for one moment apart from grace.

That we are that needy. And Jesus says he comes for needy sinners. Not the healthy, but the sick.

[21 : 27] God says he gives his grace to whom? To the humble. The needy. So here's the point. You won't experience grace to meet your needs if you don't have any.

You won't experience grace to forgive your sin if you don't have any. You won't experience grace for your failures if you don't have any.

You won't experience grace to give direction in your confusion if you never have any. You won't experience grace to be sufficient in your weakness as God promises if you don't have any weakness.

I know for those of you who know Jesus, you say your relationship with God is based on grace alone and Christ alone. And we say that, but do we live that way?

As though that's our only hope and that we need him like we need oxygen. Or do we relate to God as though we can sometimes do it on our own? That we relate to him based on our own performance often, don't we?

[22 : 35] We know I'm better than him and I'm more spiritual than her and I'm expecting a pretty good day today because I did really well yesterday. God's probably going to pay me back for that.

And so you'll notice, in fact this is cheating and looking ahead to next week and expressing grace. But for just a second, if that's something, when you're struggling with that, what you'll notice is if you're relating to God on your own performance, you'll relate to others that way too based on their performance.

And so you'll be thinking things like, well, I don't know, is he performing well enough to earn my favor today? Is she worthy of my love today?

And if you're not currently, actively in an ongoing way experiencing grace for needy, sinful, failing, confused, weak you, you will have no grace and very little time for the needy, sinful failures in your life.

For those who are confused and weak in your circles of influence. If none of that grace is being poured into you, you'll have none to pour out on others, right?

[23 : 51] Makes sense. But that's next week. The gospel invites us to come weak and needy to Jesus and to experience the present value.

In that moment, the present value of his grace. To find that not just once in the past, but again today in this moment, in that difficult situation, all of his blessings are ours.

Again today, in our weakness, he secures our right standing with God. Sinner, you stand forgiven in this moment because of Jesus.

Again today, he assures us of the Father's love. Listen, lonely and rejected one. God never takes off the proud dad shirt.

He doesn't just wear it at your adoption proceedings. He never takes it off. You never lose his smile. Even in this moment where you feel rejected, you have his smile.

[25 : 04] He is the proud dad because of Jesus. Again today, he empowers us to live for God's glory.

So if you're failing and you're just faced with that, there's hope for change in this moment, in this situation because of Jesus. Again today, he guarantees our eternal inheritance.

If you're discouraged or doubting today and you remember once upon a time when eternity was taken care of and you weren't going to worry about it, but you're struggling again, you can trust.

He has secured your eternal inheritance and it's true again today. Your glorious future is just as certain even in this moment because of Jesus.

Are you sure, Pastor? How do you know? Romans 5 verse 6. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

[26 : 14] One will scarcely die for a righteous person. Perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The grace of Christ is particularly designed for the weak and the sinful. I love that phrase, at the right time. While we were still weak, while we were still sinners, at the right time.

It wasn't that that was a terrible time. Why don't they get it together and get a little stronger and act a little bit better and then maybe I'll send my son for him. No, it was right there at your low point.

When you're at your worst, when you're struggling the most, that God said, that's the perfect time because what I'm giving is grace. And it goes right there. Jesus died for us.

Right then. Before he can clean himself up or earn his way back into the family, the prodigal son sees his father slay the fatted calf, run off the porch, throw his arms around him, and rejoice that his beloved son is home at just the right time before he could do anything else.

[27 : 37] That's my story. That's your story. That Jesus has loved you like that. He loves you like that again today.

Today again, Jesus ushers you in to the presence of the holy God where you can imagine being and Jesus says, stand.

Weak one, stand in the presence of God. Outcast rebel, stand in me. Before God.

Good church kid who could never be good enough. Stand in the presence of God. In this grace, in which we today stand in God's presence.

Jesus says, I'm your oxygen. You couldn't stand. A moment without. But I'm with you and you have me. So you stand. What kind of family would you be a part of if Southwood was your church family?

[28 : 45] Robert Farrar Kapan once described life under grace as the life of a cripple on an escalator. It's a great image.

Made me think of this short video I saw. I hope that wasn't any of y'all.

I don't think it was. But is that you? Do you see yourself in that little video clip? Do you see yourself weak and helpless?

No way to stand at the top of the escalator before God. Imagine there he is up there waiting for you and just a few steps to climb to get up there to him and you know you'll never make it.

Life keeps coming at you bump after bump and you're gonna fall. You're gonna fall. You're never making it to the top and if you do you're certainly not standing before God in his presence except in falling broken on Jesus and letting him carry you up to the top.

[30 : 12] In Jesus you are certain to stand in the presence of your father glorious and without fault with great joy. I'm so thankful to be a part of a church where this is not merely theoretical but it's a practical reality.

Listen, we're far from perfect. We're far from perfect in this way but Southwood is a family where it's a safe place for weak and broken people to experience grace.

And we need to be safer because there are some who come and don't find that. But I'm thankful that many do find that here. Just from the stories that I know you know who makes up a congregation like the one sitting right here this morning?

People walking through divorce. People coming out of prostitution. Fathers who lose their tempers. Moms who gossip about other moms they're better than.

Pastors who crave the approval of man. Cynics wrestling with doubt. Addicts battling pornography. Church kids who flunked church.

[31 : 33] And y'all listen. There's a lot of others you can come up with your own description. All of us. We all need and we all get the same great gracious Savior.

all of us. We all need him and he comes for us. We all find grace. Or it's actually even better than that isn't it?

Grace finds us floundering. Jesus finds us weak and broken and lying on our backsides and unable to get up and get into God's presence and he carries us up into the presence of God and says stand today stand I'm with you.

That's grace. Jesus comes to us. Listen absolutely this glorious grace should make us those who run as fast as we can to Jesus by reading his word by praying by worshipping with his people by confessing our sin and receiving his forgiveness absolutely of course we need all of those things those are good and right and they breathe life into our souls and yet the most glorious part is that he keeps coming to us it's not how many times we've run to him the best part is that he keeps running after us that's what we just celebrated at Christmas right the word became flesh and dwelt among us so we should come weak and needy and hungry for grace to this table this morning and we should be encouraged to remember that Jesus has come running toward us to set the table already with his body and his blood he was here before you this morning he ran towards you to get ready for this to eat with you he himself is the grace we all need to experience this is his account of when he was with his disciples at that last supper as they were eating

Jesus took bread and after blessing it he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said take eat this is my body and he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying drink of it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom this is the Lord's table he said it for you this morning it's not Southwood's table it's not a Presbyterian table if your only hope for standing in the presence of the God of the universe is Jesus that he would carry you there and that he would have died for your sins and given you his perfect record in place of yours then come come and celebrate with us his body and blood given for us if you don't know

[35 : 08] Jesus or if you're not actively trusting him to be your only hope with the father then our invitation to you this morning is not to come to a table not to come to some bread and some juice but instead to actually come to Jesus himself to know him to put your trust in him we would love to talk with you about that we would love to pray with you about that please come just come and talk with us come and tell us I'm not coming to take these elements will you just pray for me you can come and you can participate in a different way and you can come and know Jesus nothing would make us more delighted than that you would know for yourself the things we've been talking about and rejoicing in this morning let me we hope only in you there's no one in this room who could roll out a list of spiritual resume that would commend them to a holy

God except that you're here meeting with us you've wiped our slate clean and you've given us yours all the times you trusted your father all the times you obeyed all the times you suffered and you've given us your perfect record and so we stand now to eat with the father at his table and that astonishes us we thank you for that we ask father that you would set aside these common elements for a very sacred purpose that would build faith in our hearts that we would know that you actually long to eat with us that you fellowship with us that you're delighted in us and you rejoice over us because of Jesus do that in this time we ask in his name amen for for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host)