

3-1-26 The Power of Grace: When God Doesn't Remove the Pressure

Week 2

Text: Romans 5:1-5

Topics: Grace, Salvation, Christian Character

Big Idea of the Message: The grace of God gives us access to salvation and produces Christian character in us.

Application Point: We must allow God's grace to produce Christian character in us by embracing God's plan for our lives.

Last week I mentioned reading **Psalm 88**. It was written by Heman. This is a worship song! Did anyone read it?

Things the Bible says about Heman:

- Known for having great wisdom (**1 Kings 4:31**)
- Renowned for his musical ability, he was a singer! He was in a band, appointed by David. (**1 Chron. 6:33; 15:17-19; 16:41-42; 25:1**)
- Recognized for being a great parent because he had exceptional children. He had 14 sons and 3 daughters. All of them played in his band. (**1 Chron. 25:5-6**)
- Respected for his faithful service to the king (**1 Chron. 25:6**)

God is not afraid of our honesty. God put this in His word so that we all know that He understands what we are going through.

Hebrews 4:15-16, This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Hebrews 2:17-18, Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

Introduction: "When God Doesn't Remove the Pressure"

"Let's be honest... most of us came to Jesus expecting forgiveness... not friction.

We signed up for peace with God... but nobody told us there'd be tribulation with people, pressure in life, and problems that don't disappear after prayer.

We thought grace meant smooth roads.

Paul says grace often means strong shoulders.

Romans 5 doesn't tell us how to escape hardship - it tells us how grace uses hardship.

I. GRACE GIVES US ACCESS - NOT ESCAPE

Grace opens the door to God, not a bubble-wrapped life.

Grace changes our legal standing before it ever shapes our lived experience.

- **Read Romans 5:1-2**

A. We Have Been Justified (v.1)

- A completed, once-for-all action. Done to us, not by us.
- God declares the sinner righteous because of Christ, not internal transformation.

Martin Luther: "Justification is not the beginning of a process; it is the declaration of a verdict."

B. We Have Peace with God (v.1)

- This is objective peace, not emotional calm.
- Paul isn't saying, "You feel peaceful." He's saying, "The war is over."
- This is not peace of God (**Phil 4**). This is peace with God.
- There was a time when we were enemies (**v. 10**); but now in Christ we have peace with God.
- Read **Ephesians 2:14**.
- Peace with God means that our problem with sin has been settled by the blood of Christ. God is our Father, not our Judge.

C. We Have Access by Grace (v.2)

- The word access means ongoing admission - not a one-time ticket.
- Like the Make-A-Wish Foundation: The child earns nothing, deserves nothing. But access to experiences is otherwise impossible.
- That's grace. Not fairness. Not merit. Gifted access.
- Before our salvation, we stood "in Adam" and were condemned; but now in Christ, we have a perfect standing before God and can enter into His presence (**Heb. 10:19-25**).

D. We Stand in Grace/Hope - Not Mood, Merit, or Momentum

- You don't visit grace - you stand in it.
- Your standing doesn't wobble with your emotions.
- Literally, **"...we stand, and rejoice (boast) in the hope of the glory of God."**
- Read **Eph. 2:11–12** and note that the unsaved person is **"no hope."** We cannot boast in good works that bring salvation (**Eph. 2:8–9**), but we can boast in the wonderful salvation God has given us in Christ.
- Read **Ephesians 2:13, BUT...**

Application:

Stop measuring your salvation by how you feel.

Reject performance-based spirituality

Stop assuming hardship means God withdrew.

Preach the gospel to yourself when circumstances accuse you.

II. GRACE USES AFFLICTION TO FORM CHARACTER

This is where shallow faith gets offended, and deep faith gets formed.

Grace is not opposed to effort, but it is opposed to earning.

- **Read Romans 5:3-4.**

A. Paul's Shocking Claim: We Rejoice in Suffering

- **Read verse 3.**
- Greek: (thlipsis) — pressure, compression, crushing, used for squeezing grapes or olives.
- Paul doesn't say suffering is good, he says grace makes suffering productive.
- Not because suffering feels good, but because suffering can DO good.

Craig Keener: "Affliction tests faith, allowing endurance, which demonstrates the genuineness of faith."

B. The Grace Growth Chain (God's Flowchart)

Paul gives spiritual progression:

- **Read verse 4.**

- Tribulation = Affliction can produce endurance which builds a proven character resulting in hope.
- Affliction (thlipsis) pressure, compression, crushing, used for squeezing grapes or olives.
- Endurance: not passive waiting, active, faithful perseverance.
- Proven character: Tested authenticity, faith that has survived fire.
- Hope: Confident expectation rooted in God's promise.

Steven Runge: "Affliction is the starting point for the attributes believers want most."

This is not salvation by suffering... it is salvation producing perseverance.

Translation: You can't skip the gym and expect spiritual muscle.

C. God Isn't Always Punishing You – He is Proving You.

- **"Character"** (dokimē) = metal refined by fire.
- Faith that hasn't been tested hasn't been trusted yet
- Grace doesn't just forgive your past; it fortifies your future.

Application:

Ask: What is this season producing in me?

Don't waste your suffering, submit it. Trust the process.

III. GRACE PRODUCES HOPE THAT DOES NOT SHAME

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, it's Spirit-confirmed confidence.

- **Read Romans 5:5.**

A. False Hope Leads to Shame - True Hope Never Does.

- **Psalm 119**
- Hope that failure leads to shame.
- Hope grounded in God's glory never collapses.
- Biblical hope never collapses, because it rests on God's character, not outcomes.
- Paul says our hope is secure because it's internally verified.

B. The Holy Spirit Is the Down Payment of Hope

- This is covenant language. The Spirit is the **internal witness** of God's love.

Keener: "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

- Not dripped, not sprinkled, but poured.

C. Emotions Are Real – BUT Not Reliable Judges of Truth.

- Facts over feelings.

N. T. Wright reminds us: “Feelings are shifting sands; reality is bedrock.”

- “If feelings were doctrine, salvation would reset every Monday morning.”
- Hope is rooted in what God has done, not how you feel today.

Application:

Anchor your hope in truth, not temperament

Trust the Spirit’s witness even when emotions fluctuate

Let hope stabilize you, not circumstances

IV. GRACE IS THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

You don’t build character on inspiration; you build it on grace.

A. Grace Is the Load-Bearing Structure

- Grace is the load-bearing reality beneath Christian character.
- You don’t see the foundation, but without it, everything collapses.
- Grace is the unseen foundation that allows believers to endure pressure without collapse.

B. Character Is Not Built in Comfort Zones

- God doesn’t develop endurance in ease, or hope in prosperity, or maturity in convenience.
- Grace works best under pressure.

Application:

1. Stop Interpreting Hardship as Rejection

- Because you have peace with God (Romans 5:1), your suffering is not punishment.
- When trials hit, don’t say, “God must be mad at me.” Say, “I am still justified. I am still loved.”
- Grace means the war is over — even when life is loud.

2. Stand in Grace — Don't Slip Back Into Performance

- **Romans 5:2** says we stand in grace.
- That means: You don't fall in and out of God's acceptance daily. You don't earn access by spiritual productivity.
- Start your day from acceptance, not shame.
- When you fail, run to grace — not from it.

3. When Pressure Comes, Ask "What Is This Producing?"

- **Romans 5:3-4** gives us the growth chain:
- Tribulation... Endurance.... Character.... Hope
- Instead of asking, "Why is this happening?" Ask: "What is this forming in me?"
- In conflict, grow patience. In delay, grow trust. In difficulty, grow endurance.
- Don't waste pressure. Let it shape you.

4. Practice Endurance, Not Escape

- The Greek word 'hypomonē' means steadfast perseverance.
- It's not passive. It's not quitting. It's not emotional collapse.
- It's staying faithful when it's hard.
- Keep praying when you don't feel it.
- Keep serving when you're tired.
- Keep obeying when it's inconvenient.
- Endurance is quiet faithfulness.

5. Anchor Hope in Truth — Not Feelings

- **Romans 5:5** says hope does not disappoint because the Spirit confirms God's love.
- Feelings fluctuate. Truth doesn't.
- When emotions say "God is distant," answer with Scripture.
- Preach the gospel to yourself.
- Remind yourself: "I have peace. I have access. I have hope."

6. Let Grace Form Your Character

- God's goal is not just your comfort.
- It's Christlikeness.
- Grace isn't just about getting you to heaven. It's about shaping you for it.
- Ask God to refine your responses, not just remove your problems.
- Invite Him to expose pride, impatience, fear, or self-reliance.
- Submit to the shaping process.

7. Rejoice — Even If You Don't Feel Joy

- **Romans 5:3** says we rejoice in tribulation.
- Rejoicing isn't pretending it doesn't hurt.
- It's trusting God in it.
- Thank God for what He's building, even if you don't yet see it.
- Choose gratitude before the outcome changes.

This week, when pressure comes:

1. Pause.
2. Pray.
3. Ask what grace is producing.
4. Choose endurance.
5. Speak hope out loud.

“Grace doesn't just forgive your past. It fortifies your present. And it secures your future.”

Embrace God's process, not just His promises

Trust the foundation when the structure shakes

Let grace finish its work in you

Conclusion: Grace is NOT a detour around suffering; it is God's road through it.

Romans 5 teaches us this:

- Grace justifies us **before** we suffer.
- Grace sustains us **while** we suffer.
- Grace shapes us **through** suffering.
- Grace secures us **beyond** suffering.

God is not delaying His love. He is deepening it.

Romans 5 doesn't promise fewer problems. It promises stronger people.

If God has you in a season of pressure, it's not because He's angry, it's because He's forming something eternal. He is building something in you.

Prayer: