

## Grace Expectations! – God's Grace & My Pain

1/13/19 – Pastor Randy

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Last week we started talking about the expectations we should have as a church, as the children of God, living in between the first and second coming of Christ. What should we expect as people who have already been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ, but who, at the same time, are awaiting our “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). What do we hope for as people who are already born of God as part of God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), but still “*wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us*” (Rom. 8:23b).

Our focus last week was on the expectations we should have concerning our victory over sin. We learned that as children of the King, whose kingdom rule has already begun to take effect in our hearts and minds, we ought to have an expectation of real, significant spiritual transformation. At the same time, we learned that until Jesus comes again we will not reach a state of complete freedom from our struggle against temptation and sin.

Today we turn our attention to how this already, but not yet character of the Kingdom applies to our experiences with hardship, affliction, and suffering.

1 Peter 1:3-7;13

*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, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, **though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials**, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ ....*

*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, **set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.***

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### 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

### A. God's Grace is Sufficient for Present Suffering

Because of Jesus' victory leading to the Holy Spirit's presence in my life, I can expect God's present grace to make me strong through problems and pain.

If this were a bible study, we would take the time to explore all the different possible interpretations of Paul's "thorn in the flesh". But we don't need to solve that riddle in order to understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through Paul. We do know the following:

- Satan, Paul's enemy, was behind the painful problem. A "messenger of Satan" is an expression for a "servant of Satan". The enemy, who was serving Satan's will, was intending to harass Paul.
- God had a purpose in allowing this painful problem. The primary purpose was to keep Paul from becoming conceited. That was God's purpose, not the Devil's! The Devil wants you to be conceited!!
- Paul wanted the painful problem to "go away!" And he asked for that.
- God's answer was to allow it to remain but to provide His grace. Last week I told you that God's grace is not limited to his favor to forgive. We are saved by grace, sanctified by grace, stand by grace, and serve by grace. All of the above is ours because of the unmerited favor of God.
- The Holy Spirit revealed God's ultimate purpose by these phrases: *"my (God's) power is made perfect in weakness", "so that the power of Christ may rest upon me (Paul), "when I am weak, then I am strong".*

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- The unknown “thorn” fits in the same category as “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.”

### 1. God's Plans for us Overrules the Devil's Plots Against Us.

God's plans to develop you are more powerful and effective than the Devil's plots to destroy you.

The NT clearly teaches that there are Devil inspired forces behind the trials that we face. But it also clearly teaches that God has a purpose and plan to take what the Devil meant for evil and turn it around for good!

*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*  
1 Peter 5:10

a. God allows trials to teach us about ourselves. Peter tells us that trials are a means by which the genuineness of our faith is revealed. In 1 Peter 1:7 he wrote, “*you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith... may be found to result in praise...*” Trials provide a platform for testimonies. Trials can also help us by revealing just how strong or weak our trust in God, and commitment to God, really is. In Job's case, the trials he went through served to confirm his trust in God and vindicate him as a true believer. In Peter's case, the trial he experienced that led to his denial of Christ was something God used to show Peter his own weakness and his need to be less self-confident and more God-reliant.

### b. Trials and suffering are a means through which God strengthens and develops faith.

*Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. <sup>3</sup> For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. <sup>4</sup> So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.* – James 1:2-4

When Paul wrote that he was “content” with “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities” he was not expressing that he was a masochist

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who derives pleasure from pain and suffering. He was not saying that these things are “good” in themselves but that he was willing to embrace and endure them, allowing God to use them in his life to teach and strengthen him. He would not cry out to God in frustration, “Why me!?” but would instead cry out, “Help me and strengthen me.” We can learn a good lesson from Jesus prayer in the garden, “Lord, if possible, please remove this suffering from me; but not my will, your will be done.”

### 2. God's grace doesn't provide an IMMEDIATE escape from suffering, but the ability to overcome through suffering.

No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. Romans 8:37

“Despite all these things”. What things? Trouble, calamity, persecution, hunger, danger, threats, deprivation.

In 1 John 5 we are told that “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” All overcoming on our part is through Him, by Him, because of Him, and ultimately for Him.

Overcoming isn't about physical survival. If it was, then none of the disciples overcame except John, and spending your final years exiled on a desert island doesn't exactly fit our normal definition of overcoming.

Overcoming means staying true to your faith and commitment to God no matter what the Devil throws at you. Christianity has enjoyed a significant measure of cultural respectability and popularity that in turn has resulted in cultural influence. But that is changing. We need to be ready to stand with God and determine that no one is going to scare me away from my allegiance to God and no one is going to shame me away from my allegiance to God.

Christine Caine recently shared this at the 2019 Passion Conference.

“The modern concept of Christians is that they are weird, intolerant and narrow, and we just have to accept that.”

“You're going to have to be willing to look foolish.” “This is what's going to set us apart in these days.”

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Overcoming also means refraining from believing the lie that your trials and suffering are evidence that you have fallen out of favor with God.

### 3. Difficulties can Create Doubt in God's Love

Romans 8:35-37 *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. "Neither life or death"  
NO thing, NO thing,

Now for our second "Grace Expectation".

### B. God's Future Grace Eliminates Suffering Forever!!!

Because of Jesus I expect a future grace where suffering will be no more!! Peter wrote, "...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, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice!

Then he went on to write,

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus resurrection has created for us a great expectation made possible only by the grace of God. This great, grace expectation does two things for us in the midst of pain and hardship: It gives us joy and it prepares us to endure!

*When He comes...* we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.  
*So Until He comes...* let's live lives that please Him, conformed to His image.

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*When He comes...* only what he says about us will matter. Only His judgement matters,

*So Until He comes...* Don't live for the approval and praise of others

*When He comes...* He will reward each one according to their works in the body.

*So Until He comes...* Let's be passionate for good works like he said his people would be (Titus 2:14)

*When He comes...* we will live in His presence in the new heavens and new earth that will make this present world look like a desert place.

*So Until He comes...* Let's store up treasures in heaven that have lasting value.

*When He comes...* He will pronounce His final justice on all evil.

*So Until He comes...* Let's act justly, show mercy and walk humbly with God.

*When He comes...* HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR, PAIN, SHAME, & DEATH

*So Until He comes...* Hope, trust, anticipate. Don't give up, he's coming for you!

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Kingdom – God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) ruling by His power and authority to bring about a state of affairs which is in perfect harmony with His will and creational purposes. This state of affairs can also be described as his work of new creation.

**Jesus has already defeated the Devil and delivered us from the fear of death.**  
*“For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.”* – Hebrews 2:14b-15

**Jesus has yet to destroy the Devil and Abolish death**

*But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.*

*<sup>24</sup> After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. <sup>26</sup> And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.* 1 Corinthians 15:23-26

*Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* Revelation 20:10

*“...and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory...”*

- Hebrews 2:9b-10a

The new creation has begun:

*“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”* ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)).

*For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Eph. 2:10

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At the same time the new creation is still to come:

“But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” ([2 Peter 3:13](#)).

**The new creation has begun BUT the new creation is still to come.**

*Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay*

**The new creation is still to come**

*For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory*

**The new creation has begun**

*for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.*

**The new creation is still to come**

The Kingdom Already:

*“...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” Eph. 1:20-23*

The Not Yet:

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*“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God.**”*

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—**heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**”*

By God's grace I expect to persevere through problems and pain.

By God's grace I expect

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John Calvin quote from Romans:

John the Baptist

Luke 24:13-35

John 11

Holy Spirit shrinks the gap and grace fills it.

Expectations of Holiness

Romans 6

Grace reminds me I can expect forgiveness and mercy when I fail.

Grace reminds me that I can expect power that will help me to overcome temptation and live righteously. Romans 6:14 (Jesus & the Kingdom pg 294)

Grace Expectations for Suffering

Grace Expectations for the Church

“It wasn’t a pastor that bought the car — it was a husband that bought the car. Get that in your spirit,” Gray said. “I’m a husband first. Don’t confuse what I do with who I am. What I do is I pastor God’s people. Who I am is a husband and a father, and I’ll do anything to honor them.”

“The answer is no. Absolutely not. And, God, take my life on this live feed if I did,” he said. “I have been patient my whole life for this moment. I’m 45. I’m supposed to wait till I’m 70 to live my best life? And my best life is seeing my wife happy” Gray added.

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