

Grace, Glory and Hope

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*. To him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace *be* with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.
(1Pe 5:10-14)

We have come to the end of Peter's epistle, and the final verses serve as an effective summary of all we have looked at. You might be able to summarise I Peter with three words, grace, hope and glory. God gives you grace. That grace is supposed to produce hope in you, in a sin-cursed world where hope is foreign. This hope in turn, being such an unusual thing in this world gives God the glory. God gives grace. You get hope. God gets the glory.

Let's look at those three statements.

I God gives grace.

In fact, verse 12 serves as a summary statement for the whole book. By Silvanus – another name for Silas, Paul's oft companion I have written briefly – exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand. Peter says, Silvanus was my secretary to whom I dictated this letter, and what it's been about is God's grace. In fact, a few times in this series we've said you could divide this book up into three sections. The first, chapters 1 through to the first half of chapter 2 is *understand* or *know* the grace of God. From there to chapter 3 verse 12, it is let the grace of God enable you to submit – so as to keep your testimony. And from there to the end of chapter 4 it is let the grace of God enable you to suffer – so as to keep your testimony and keep your rewards. It's been about grace.

Verse 10 really summarises all that God's grace does for us.

Notice it says 'The God of all grace' What a wonderful title. All the empowerment you need, all the merciful enablement to know Him and serve Him – He is that God.

Don't ever forget, that when you talk about God's glory – or His holiness – that is all that He is, the most glorious thing about God as far as a sinner goes – is His grace.

If I am hungry, the most glorious, valuable thing to me in a shop is not the power tools or the clothes section. I am drawn to the food. The food seems all the more tempting and precious. As a sinner, of all the attributes of God – His justice, His wisdom, His power, His knowledge, His eternity, His sovereignty, - the one most attractive to me is His grace. Because as a sinner that's what I need most. It is only when I get mercy and grace from God that I can admire His power, His wisdom, His knowledge, His justice – because now I know they will not be used against me as His enemy, but in my favour as His Son.

When God passed before Moses, it is interesting what was at the top of His list of self-descriptions: "And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth," (Exo 34:6)

Verse 12 tells us what it means that God gives grace.

Grace calls us to glory. Grace means that God calls us. Think of that concept – to be called. You call someone's name when you want them to come to you. When you call someone, it is because they are not coming to you, they are not faced in your direction. So you call them. The start of God's grace is that He calls us by Christ Jesus. He draws us to salvation. He draws us to Jesus Christ the Saviour.

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (Rom 8:29-30)

In fact, the word church means 'called-out ones'.

And God calls us out of the world and to His glory. That's grace. That sinners, who have rejected their Creator, can spend eternity with Him in glory. We saw that in 1:4-5: "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

God's has given us grace in saving us – calling us, and guaranteeing us a home in heaven.

Grace matures us. Here Peter says that God's work of growth in believers is described with four words: perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. Those are really four words that are descriptive of the same thing – maturity. God's grace is not only going to save you, he is going to sanctify you. He is going to finish the work he has begun in you.

The word *perfect* comes from a word meaning to join together, to fit something into its joint. To shape it and make it perfectly fitting, like a woodcarver who planes the wood until he has a perfect fit. Maturity is God completing you, mending you, restoring you till you are at peak usefulness to Him.

The word *establish* means to stabilise, to fix in place, to firm up, to set fast and make constant. God is going to root your Christian life down so you are no longer tossed around between this false doctrine and that one, led astray by every temptation, at the beck and call of your flesh's every whim and desire.

"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," (Eph 4:13-14)

The word *strengthen* calls our attention to the fact that God is going to be empowering all of this. God's will give you both the desire and the ability to do His will. Philippians 2:13 tells us this.

The word *settle* means to be founded – to be grounded. It's the word used when Jesus says: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." (Mat 7:25)

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love," (Eph 3:17)

The idea is a sound foundation which is consolidated – the winds of sin and false teaching cannot blow it down.

What a wonderful description of maturity. You're shaped to be the person God wants you to be. You're stabilised and consistent in your obedience. You're empowered to keep on with that obedience. And you're firmly grounded and won't be blown over.

God's grace is going to do this. Grace is going to mature us.

Grace helps us through suffering

“after you have suffered a while”. That’s an interesting phrase. It suggests two things. Firstly, that the suffering isn’t permanent. ‘A while speaks of it being temporary’. And we saw that in verse 6 of chapter 1.

Secondly, that God is control of the length of your suffering. God is not absent from our suffering. When Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego were in the furnace, there was a fourth man with them. So as we go through the fire of suffering for the name of Christ, more than ever – Christ is with us. And he does not allow the trial to go on any longer than it needs to.

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” (1Co 10:13)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,
(2Co 4:17)

And as we have seen throughout this epistle God does not take you out of suffering, He takes you through suffering. And as He takes you through it – He moulds you, shapes you, purifies you. But He never leaves you. That’s His grace.

And the connection in this verse mustn’t be missed – the suffering is a crucial part of His maturing you. *After* you have suffered – God will perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

It is as if God gets this raw material called a new believer. But the sin and the selfishness and the pride and the unbelief is like deeply embedded metal inside the rock. So God can only draw that out if He turns up the heat. He must put us through a furnace of affliction to draw out and purge the selfishness and worldliness and laziness and lukewarmness, and so He can purify our faith, our devotion, our love for Him. And when you see it form this perspective, you see it is grace. And how much more when you read verses like: “But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”(Lam 3:32-33) God takes pains to pain us – but His love does it. Whom He loves He chastens.

So God gives grace. He calls us to salvation and to a future hope. He matures us in the faith and makes us like Christ. He guides us through suffering, and even promises to reward us for it.

Well, the presence of grace produces something in us – hope.

II. Grace Produces Hope

We saw this in 1:3. God’s grace produces a living, real hope in us.

What is hope? As we have seen, hope is not a vague optimism. Hope is not positive desires with uncertain expectations. Hope is not ‘I hope it doesn’t rain’ or “I hope to see you in the future’ or “I hope the petrol price comes down’. It is not an undecided wishfulness.

Biblical hope is the emotion of faith. It is a full confidence that what God said He would do, He will do. It is a sense of absolute assurance, undoubting expectation, confident waiting for what will be.

The writer of Hebrews describes faith this way: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”(Heb 11:1)

Notice the two categories in that verse – the unseen, and the future. And faith, and therefore hope treats the unseen as seen, and the future as present. It acts on God’s promises for the future as being good enough to bank on in the present.

So you have joy in future grace. The promises of God’s salvation of your soul, God’s deliverance through trials, God’s home for you in heaven, God’s reward for your faithfulness, God’s strength through difficulty, God’s maturing you and finishing the work He began in you – you let these future promises change your behaviour in the present. They give you hope.

Now why does grace produce hope? Simple: Past and present grace point to future grace. Looking at God calling you, maturing you and helping you through suffering, is enough evidence to say – God will keep being this way to me in the future. And that is hope. You believe that God’s grace will continue into the future.

“Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home’.

Hope is based on faith. Faith is based on God’s character. It is your experience of God’s character thus far – seen in His race, that gives you much cause to look forward to more.

Anxiety and fear comes from meditating on future uncertainties. What if I lose my job? What if I am in an accident and am paralyzed from the neck down? What if I get cancer? What if my husband leaves me? What if I never get married? What if my spouse never changes and I’m trapped in a bad marriage forever? What if I am hijacked? What if my car breaks down on the side of the road and I am shot? What if I am raped or shot by a criminal? What if a paedophile abducts one of my children? What if my rent goes up to where I can’t afford it and am tossed out? What if someone exposes my past? What if my children turn away from the Lord in the future? What if the church goes corrupt and is filled with false doctrine and divisions? What if the pastors turn out to be hypocrites? What if I am rejected by people at church? What if the interest rate goes up to where I can’t afford my repayment? What if the country descends into a Zimbabwe situation?

Now you can add to that list indefinitely, because there is no limit to how many uncertainties your mind can dream up. And so you can scare yourself into a state of near-constant anxiety. That’s because you are meditating on future uncertainties. While some of those things are things for which you can take wise precautions, to be meditating on future uncertainties will destroy your hope and fill you with near-constant worry.

In contrast – a mind being renewed by the Word of God says: I know the kind of gracious God I serve – I have seen it. He says in His Word – all things work together for God to them that love God. He says ‘I will finish the work I began in you’ He says ‘my grace is sufficient for you’ He says I go to prepare a place for you. He says ‘I will never leave you not forsake you’. He says ‘I will love you with an everlasting love’ He says “you are of more value than sparrows – and I feed and clothes sparrows’. And these are certainties. You don’t know about the future uncertainties. So there is no point in meditating on

them. As I meditate on future certainties – I have hope. I don't need to know all the details – that is just my pride wanting to control everything. I can know what He said, and I can rest in it and joy in my God.

Past and present grace guarantee future grace – which comes to us in the form of God's promises in the Word. As we expect these future and currently invisible things as if they are present and visible – we live in hope.

III. A hopeful people in a hopeless world give God the glory

This kind of hope will bring God glory. That is, it will call the attention of people to what is the secret of a Christian's joy, assurance, consolation, optimism, and gladness.

After all, this is a world filled with sin. People are killing each other, abusing one another, exploiting, stealing, lying, slandering, deceiving, envying, backstabbing, hating each other. There is so much sin, that there seems to be more reason to be gloomy. The human race is a terrible, evil race. Jesus described what comes out of the human heart: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mar 7:21-23)

Now anyone not infected with the hallucinatory drug called humanism which says that man is good and everything will work out in the end, you will be pretty depressed by this world. So to have joy, to have a spring in your step, a gladness amidst the gloom – that will draw a question or two.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (1Pe 3:15)

This is also a world filled with oppression. The strong oppress the weak. And this nearly always crushes hope in people. When you are powerless, you will be hopeless. And so Peter has been telling us about submission to authority – be it national or civil, be it in the workplace or in the home. And when we have hope, even though we are under ungodly authority – that makes people ask questions. Our sense of optimism and gladness, when to the unbelieving eye there is no way out for us and things don't look like they are improving will cause them to ask – what are you hoping in?

This is also a world filled with suffering. Whether it be wars, crime, famine, sickness, poverty, calamity, tragedy, death, unfair treatment – it is suffering. And the usual reaction to suffering is to simply bemoan your suffering – complain or cry.

But when Christians suffer with hope, it again makes the world stop and notice. If something negative is happening to you, and you are acting like something positive is happening, there must be something in your life more positive than this is negative! What is that thing, they will ask.

And that is where God gets the glory. As we share with people that our hope lies within us – it is Christ Himself – Him being our Saviour and Lord, and all His promises that He has made to us, all the grace we have received, are receiving and expect to receive – this

glorifies Him. Particularly because it occurs in adverse circumstances. Hope during positive circumstances speaks. Hope during negative circumstances shouts.

This is why Peter says: “To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 5:11)
Also 4:11.

All glory belongs to Him for the kind of God He is. But being people of hope is one of the ways we glorify Him. We know His grace, and so in our hope – we show His glory.

I think again of the sheep. Picture a massive heard of sheep on a hillside. As they are brought in to the fold, they pass before you and the large majority of them look terrible. They are dirty, diseased, filled with parasites, agitated and weak. They are thin, their eyes look sickly, and their walk shows how sickly they are. They are even sometimes butting one another and aggressive. But then, in amongst them, you spot some strange exceptions. Speckled here and there are clean, healthy, well-fed satisfied sheep. They walk without trouble, they don't seem agitated, they are parasite-free and seem content. Now as they are all in the fold, two shepherds emerge. The one sheep calls out his sheep by name, and one by one – all the clean, healthy and contented sheep come to him. All of them. What are left are all the sickly and diseased ones, and they belong to the other shepherd. Well, as you look at the shepherd walking off with his flock of healthy sheep, what will you think of him? What will your opinion be of his skills as a shepherd? What will you say to yourself as you compare these two shepherds. In short the one shepherd will receive glory from you. You will esteem him highly, you will honour him, because of the state of his sheep in and amongst all these others.

The same is true for us. It is when people see God's sheep filled with hope in and amongst a world of people without it, that they begin to give glory to the Shepherd. They recognise His great skill and ability. They recognise the power of His Person, the faithfulness of His promises. And He gets glory.

This is why we are here. To give God glory. To know Him and to show Him. To know Christ and to make Him known.

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1Pe 2:9)

Peter closes this epistle by sending greeting from the church ('her' at Babylon. Peter probably wasn't in literal Babylon, this was more than likely a code for either Jerusalem or Rome. If he was in Rome, he called it Babylon so as to not endanger the Christians there, as the persecutions were beginning. If at Jerusalem, he called it that because of the great apostasy of the city.

He mentions Mark – who is more than likely the same John Mark who travelled with Paul and Barnabas, and ultimately wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Peter closes with the encouragement to show one another love, and blesses all those who are saved with peace.

God has given the grace. Now, we have a responsibility. Are we going to believe and thereby have hope which glorifies Him? Or are we going to disbelieve, and so look no different from all the other sheep?

May the message of I Peter truly ring in our ears – God has given grace, so that we might have hope, so that He might have glory.