“Grace For Catastrophes And Inconveniences”

March 18, 2018

II Corinthians 9:6-15

Please find with me the 5th chapter of Romans.

This is a true story written by a retired businessman about a lunch date he had with his wife. “The love for my fellow man was stolen from me earlier this week. The affectionate heart that warmly embraced friends and strangers alike was slammed shut. My genial smile was gone, replaced with a cynical sneer.

I was having lunch with my wife at a restaurant in the loop. Her stylish, leather backpack was on the chair next to her and I was seated across the table. A man came in and sat at the adjoining table. I took notice of him because he did not seem particularly interested in ordering anything. A few minutes passed. Arlene and I were enjoying lunch, chatting away. I saw the man hurrying out the door of the restaurant. Again, it was unusual but I had only a fleeting moment of curiosity rather than suspicion. A minute later Arlene, startled and perturbed, blurted “My backpack, where’s my backpack?”

I was beside myself for not having the foresight to put two and two together. Fuming, I ran out to the street looking for the perp. But he was gone. Of course we sprang into action and called the police (a big ho hum), the bank and the credit card companies - only minutes had passed but already he had charged $700 at a nearby Macy’s.

Arlene was angry but stoic. She put things in perspective. “It’s an inconvenience, not a catastrophe” [Found on <http://www.chicagonow.com> “Cheating Death” by Howard Englander].

Maybe you’ve said nee of the following things when you’ve had to face something that is either a catastrophe or an inconvenience *or* quote *“too much for you”*. Here are some ways you might have responded.

1. “I don’t know how I’ll ever get through this.”
2. “Somehow; one way or another I’ll get through it.”
3. “LORD, help me get through this.”
4. “How could this have happened to me?”
5. “Is this how God shows me He loves me?”
6. “I’ll never get through this one.”
7. Some of you might even say “Well, that’s the breaks.” (George Strait Country And Western tune)
8. “That’s how the cookie crumbles.”
9. “What goes around comes around.”

All of this sounds to me like blind acceptance of these sorts of things as if there was nothing that can be done. Well, what does God’s Word say about it? I’ve titled today’s message “Grace For Catastrophes And Inconveniences.” Shall we pray?

Romans is an epistle, a letter, that reveals, that explains, and that exalts grace; God’s grace. You see, everyone benefits from grace. Titus 2:11 *“**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”*

The word “grace” can be found twenty different places in Romans. And one of them is right here in Romans five.

Here’s what we find God saying through Pau in Romans 5:1 *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this* ***grace*** *wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*(3) And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) and patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

Now, before we take a closer look at grace from these verses, look a little further down the passage with me at the fifteenth verse. Romans 5:15 *“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more* ***the grace of God****, and* ***the gift by grace****, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

*(16) And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. (17) For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive* ***abundance of grace*** *and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

*(18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

*(20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded,* ***grace*** *did much more abound: (21) that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might* ***grace*** *reign through righteous-ness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

The man who wrote Romans was a grace preacher. His name was Paul. And Paul had grown up in a home where the law reigned supreme. His parents were Jewish. And, no doubt, from his earliest days, Paul was expected to do his dead level best to be the model Jew and even eventually the model Pharisee. But it wasn’t until Paul met Jesus Christ and came to trust Him that he found that there is a huge differ-ence between God’s Law and God’s Grace; between efforts to serve God and the empowerment of His Grace to do what He commands.

Folks, you can only be saved by grace; by grace alone; with not one single work. Salvation is a free gift that must be received. *And*, once saved, you then live your new life in Christ also by His grace. And, as long as you depend upon your flesh, you find the Christian life to be a whole lot less than Jesus promised; even to some, drudgery and hard and seemingly not worth the effort.

You see there are two ways that Christians are taught to live the Christian life. One, by dependence upon God’s grace. Or, two, by dependence upon your own effort, your own energy. And these two approaches are hugely different.

Paul says *“For by grace are ye saved…”* And he also says, by the words given to him by Jesus Himself *“My grace [the grace of Jesus] is sufficient [enough] for you.”*

So, if you’re ever wondering how it is that some Christians find a large measure of joy and enough strength to live their Christian life while others are constantly struggling, constantly burdened, here’s the answer. *“My grace is sufficient for you.”*

So, Romans is an epistle on God’s grace. And this fifth chapter is a wonderful clarification passage. Paul makes the point so clear. You have a constant need for God’s grace. That’s what we find here in these first few verses.

One, those who are justified by faith have peace with God; verse one. Two, we have access to His grace by faith; verse two. Three, we overcome the challenges in life by grace; verses three and four. And four, wherever you find God’s grace you find God’s love; verse five.

First, then, everybody who is justified by God’s grace has peace with God; verse one.

Romans 5:1 *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: …”*

Romans five is a chapter on consequences; meaning these are the consequences, the effects of being justified. At the moment you trust Christ; at the moment you come to believe on Him, God declares you as righteous as Jesus Himself. Once you had a standing as a sinner before the God of Heaven. Now your standing is that of a Saint, a holy one. You are no longer a condemned sinner. Rather, you are a justified saint of God.

And, as part of that justification by faith, you discover that God is the God of peace. Romans 5:1 *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: …”*

That’s because God is the God of peace as Paul concludes his epistle to the Romans. Romans 15:33 says this *“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”*

And just like there is no love without God because God is love; there is no peace apart from God because *He* is your peace. Ephesians 2:13 *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes [formerly] were far off are made nigh [near to God] by the blood of Christ. (14) For* ***he is our peace*** *…”*

And here’s Paul’s word to the Colossian Church. Colossians 1:20 *“And, having made* ***peace*** *through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. (21) And you, that were sometime [formerly] alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”*

When a person is in an unsaved and unbelieving and pagan condition, he sees God as Someone Who is against him or Someone to appease. And before coming to Christ you actually are alienated from Him because of your sins. But, once you’ve been justified by faith, you now have a wonderfully new relationship to Him; you are granted peace with God.

Yes, at one time you opposed God and at one time you were an alien from God; you wanted little or nothing to do with Him; now you’ve entered into the bright new world where you are no longer at odds with Him. He’s won you over. You’ve surrendered and now you’re on His side and He’s on yours. You, Christian, you now have peace with God.

The Hebrew word for peace is “Shalom.” It means *“no more war with God.”* Isaiah 32:17 *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.”* Shalom is a condition in which the human being is now in agreement with his God. We’re now on the same page with Him.

For all my life I’ve heard and read about “Peace Talks” between Israel and the Palestinians. And for all the talk about peace between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations, there is no peace. And the reason is right here in this passage. Apart from the Prince of Peace, we have no peace with God. So, can warring nations enjoy peace with each other if they haven’t come to the Prince of Peace themselves?

Something total transforming took place on the day you were justified. God removed any and all enmity between you and Him; permanently; forever. That’s what we find here in verse one. Romans 5:1 *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: …”*

“Imagine a nation or nations going to war against a nation or nations. The reason for the war were the wicked and cowardly and wrong deeds of these other nations. They were entirely at fault.

At the end of the war, when the treaty of peace is being established, after the unconditional surrender has been made, the victorious side announces that no reparations will be demanded.

But, that, in fact they and their former enemies will enter into a joint partnership for peace, and they, those who are the conquerors, will invest in those who were the conquered in order to build them up in a life of justice and righteous-ness.

You can hear a little bit of the background of the peace treaty between the Allied and the Axis powers at the end of the Second World War there, can’t you? And that’s precisely what God does here.

We can’t pay the reparations. They’re too great. And so He has paid the reparations, and He has done all that is necessary to establish peace and to bring us into the participation of fellowship and friendship with Him.” [Found on [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org) “Justification By Faith Means Peace With God” by Pastor J. Ligon Duncan].

You may know people who lack peace. You yourself may be among those who lack peace. You sort-of “trudge along” through life just doing the same thing day after day. And you may have even said *“Something’s missing in my life.”* Well, folks, it’s not the peace *of* God you are missing out on. It’s peace *with* God because when God declares you righteous, when He justifies you, He also declares you no longer to be an alien to Him. You have peace with Him; permanent peace. And from *that* flows the peace *of* God as well. But, says the Holy Spirit through Paul, first in line in your justification comes peace *with* God.

First, all who are justified by God’s grace have peace with God.

Second, all who are justified have access to His grace by faith; verse two. Romans 5:2 *“By whom [by Jesus Christ] also we have access by faith* ***into this grace*** *wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

Now that you’ve entered into peace with God, you need never fear coming into His presence again. Why? You stand *in* His grace. This is your new position. This is your new standing. The relationship between you and God has been eternally altered. You who believe in the blood of Christ now stand in a new place. You stand in God’s grace.

 Think about your life and your days before you came to the LORD. What was it like? Here’s what it was like. You were under the law. You were under the law with all its demands. You were required to obey it. And, if you did not obey, you were guilty. You were condemned. And try though you would, you could never fulfill all its requirements.

Then, along came someone with the Good News that Christ has done for you what you could never do for yourself. He fully complied with every single law laid down between God and man. He was obedient. He kept the law. And by faith, you came to trust in the work of Christ at the Cross of Calvary. Now, you, child of God, you have access to that grace every moment of your Christian life.

Access. Imagine living in a war-torn nation like Syria or Yemen or even Venezuela today. There are over six million people who have been displaced from their homes in Syria [Found on www.crs.org/Syria-Crisis‎]. There are two million displaced people from Yemen [Found on [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)]. And there are over one and a half million displaced people from Venezuela [Found on <https://reliefweb.int/report/venezuela>].

Now, imagine that it was you who has been literally pushed out of your home by the ravages of war. No longer do you have access to your own home. Access. It’s a privilege. You once could come and go as you please. But now you’ve been displaced. You have no more access.

Now read with me again Romans 5:2 *“By whom [by Jesus Christ] also we have access by faith* ***into this grace*** *wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

You now stand in God’s grace and you now have constant access to that grace every minute of your day. And it’s all because you are now justified by faith in Christ.

Access means I can enter His presence anytime I want or need to. Access means He welcomes me as His own son. Access means I can freely speak. Access means I am fully accepted by Him. Access means I am alive with His life in me. Access means I belong. Access means I can go in and out and find all I need in Him.

Now, those of you here today who are not justified by faith; you have no access. You’re a stranger. God is a stranger to you. And you feel your access is limited. And it is. Why? You haven’t come through the right door. And which door is that, Pastor. This one. John 10:1 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (2) But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

*(3) To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. (4) And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

*(5) And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (6) This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. (7) Then said Jesus unto them again, verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

*(8) All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. (9) I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”*

Aren’t you glad that He’s the Door? And, aren’t you glad that He’s opened Himself to you? Folks, if you’re justified by faith, you have access.

First, all who are justified by God’s grace have peace with God.

Second, all who are justified have access to His grace by faith.

Third, all who are justified overcome the challenges in life by grace; verse three. Romans 5:3*“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) and patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; …”*

Whether it’s an inconvenience or a catastrophe, whether it’s traumatic or comforting, you have a totally different outlook on things now that you stand inside God’s grace. Look at this word “glory.” It means “to exult.” And what do you usually exult in? What do you really feel joy and gladness in? It’s usually success or something good, isn’t it? You feel jubilation when you win. That’s what this term “glory” means here in verse three.

Look at it again. Romans 5:3*“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) and patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) and hope maketh not ashamed; …”*

What a huge difference justification makes in the personal life of a Christian! You’ve been saved for heaven. That’s for sure. And in heaven you will bask in the glory of God. But, you’ve also been saved for earth.

And, child of God, what is there to exult in? Let me show you what the Christian life really is; verse three. A Christian exults in tribulation. Tribulation is another word for affliction. Doesn’t that sound like the opposite of what some preach regarding salvation? Some say, “Come to Jesus and He’ll correct everything that’s wrong in your life.” “Come to Christ and see if He won’t make a big difference in your life.” “See if He won’t solve your problems.”

And then, as one man told me a while back *“I didn’t sign up for this.”* He began to discover that tribulation, affliction, trouble is part and parcel of His walk with the LORD.

And why? Because affliction serves a specific purpose in God’s program. It generates endurance. Another word for patience is endurance. And, says the Holy Spirit in Paul, as you increase in patience, you begin to learn that patience too serves a specific purpose. It’s to develop character. Experience is another word for character.

And character too serves a specific purpose in God’s work on your life. With character comes hope and hope, like all the others, serves the purpose of bringing complete you freedom from shame.

Let me zero on just one of these processes. It’s the experience one. Here’s the Greek word δοκιμήν. What is “Doximain”? It means this “proof of genuineness; thoroughly tested.”

Do you remember the days of ninth grade science when you performed experiments? And for what purpose did you do those experiments? Your goal was to practice what your teacher called “the Scientific Method.” You would see exactly what would happen and either prove or disprove your theory, or answer your question, or illustrate your idea. At the end of our experiments we would have to write out the details of what we found.

The word here in your Bible “experience” is this very same idea. And so, what does the Christian life look like? What’s it like to have been justified by faith? Here’s what it looks like. We exult in affliction because affliction generates endurance. And endurance generates character. And character generates hope.

And hope develops an *“I’m not ashamed”* life. This, Paul says, is the end point. In my heart I’m finding God’s grace is sufficient because I am not. And when I learn to depend upon that Divine Sufficiency I discover that I never again need to feel ashamed that I belong to the Savior of mankind, the LORD Jesus.

And how can you possibly do this? Only by God’s grace. You see, to depend upon your own strength is to struggle in a struggle you cannot win. Your constant struggle will generate an experience of defeat and discouragement and, in some cases, disappointment with God. But, in leaning on Someone Else’s strength; in leaning on the grace of our LORD Himself, you find a divine enablement to do all you need to do every day of your life.

So, Christian, you will one day exult in the glory of God. You will enter into the Celestial City, into the very doors of Heaven itself. But in the meantime God is growing you through the inconveniences and the catastrophes of your life. And, along with those inconveniences and catastrophes He supplies you with His grace.

First, all who are justified by God’s grace have peace with God.

Second, all who are justified have access to His grace by faith.

Third, all who are justified overcome the challenges in life by grace.

And finally, those who know God’s grace know God’s love deeply and personally; verse five.

Romans 5:5*“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

The Holy Spirit is the One Who brings our awareness to all the provisions God has made for us. And the phrase the Holy Spirit gives to us through Paul is *“the love of God is shed abroad.”* Here’s what it means for you and me personally. It means “poured out” like you’d pour a liquid into a cup or glass.

The Holy Spirit pours out God’s love from an unending fountain of love; God’s love is personal from His heart into mine.

Let me illustrate from the words of one of the wives of the great preachers of the past. Her name, Sara Edwards. Her husband, Pastor Jonathan Edwards, revival preacher, phil-osopher, born in East Windsor, CT October 5, 1703. He’s especially well-known for a sermon he preached in North-ampton, MA in 1741. Here’s his wife Sara on the experience of Romans 5:5 and the Holy Spirit pouring out the love of God into her heart.

*“The presence of God was so near and so real, that I seemed scarcely conscious of anything else. God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, seemed as distinct persons, both manifesting their inconceivable lovely-ness, and mildness, and gentleness, and their great and immutable love to me.*

*While I was uttering the words (of one of Isaac Watts’ hymns) my mind was so deeply impressed with the love of Christ, and a sense of his immediate presence, that I could with difficulty refrain from rising from my seat, and leaping for joy.”*

God made it this way that one of the most necessary elements in your walk with Him is an awareness of His personal love. What I need day in and day out is God’s love. And Who is it that pours this love into your heart contin-ually? It’s His Holy Spirit. He’s the One Who pours it out into you. That’s His role.

God’s love for unfathomable. You can’t fully compre-hend it. But you do taste it. His is a whole-hearted love for you. And how can you fulfill God’s command to love Him back whole-heartedly? By responding to His love poured out into you by His Spirit. When I know that love personally, I have only one response to my Heavenly Father. *“Father, I love you with all my heart, all my soul, and all strength.”*

So, how will you love your husband and how will you love your wife and how will you love your children and how will you love your parents and how will you love your neighbor and how will you love your enemy? By this over-whelming wonderful love poured out into your heart by the Spirit of God.

What then is this “grace for catastrophes and inconven-iences”? It’s this.

One, all who are justified by God’s grace have peace with God.

Two, all who are justified have access to His grace by faith.

Three, all who are justified overcome the challenges in life by grace.

And four, those who know God’s grace know God’s love deeply and personally.

I don’t know where you are at in your relationship to Romans five. But God does. If you haven’t trusted in Christ and received His free gift of righteousness, today is the Day of Salvation for you.

Here’s what the Bible teaches. Repent and believe.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Have you repented? Are you believing on Christ alone for your Eternal Security? If not, why not?

And if you are repenting, here’s a simple prayer you can pray.

The Sinner’s Prayer. *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 354 “I Cannot Tell”

Video at close: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6B\_jYtjvME