

Prayer - 1 Peter 5:10, 11, Part 1

by A.W. Pink

A.W. Pink's sermon explores the profound implications of prayer in 1 Peter 5:10-11, highlighting the role of God's grace in the believer's life, especially during suffering.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "The Power of Prayer", "The God of All Grace"

Description

A.W. Pink explores the profound prayer of Peter in 1 Peter 5:10-11, emphasizing the significance of approaching 'the God of all grace' who calls believers to eternal glory. He highlights the seven key elements of the prayer, including the supplicant's experience, the context of suffering, and the assurance of God's restorative grace. Pink draws parallels between Peter's own failures and the grace he received, illustrating how God's grace is essential for believers to endure trials and resist temptation. The sermon encourages both pastors and congregants to engage in fervent prayer, recognizing that divine grace is necessary for spiritual strength and perseverance.

Transcript

We come now to an apostolic prayer the contents of which, as a whole, are very sublime. Its contents are remarkably full, and a careful study of, and devout meditation upon, it shall be richly repaid. My present task will be rendered the easier since I am making extensive use of Thomas Goodwin's excellent and exhaustive exposition of the passage. He was favored with much light on this portion of Scripture, and I wish to share with my readers what has been of no little help and blessing to me personally.

There are seven things that we should consider regarding this prayer: (1) the supplicant, for there is an intimate and striking relationship between the experiences of Peter and the terms of his prayer; (2) its setting, for it is closely connected with the context, particularly with verses 6-9; (3) its Object, namely, "the God of all grace"--a title especially dear to His people and most appropriate in this context; (4) its plea, for so ought the clause "who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" to be regarded; (5) its petition, "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you"; (6) its qualification, "after that ye have suffered a while," for though that clause precedes the petition, yet it logically follows it when the verse is treated homiletically; and (7) its ascription, "to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"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" (v. 10). In these words the apostle begins his appeal to Him who is the Fountain of grace, and with such a One to look to the chief of sinners

need not despair. Next, he mentions that which gives proof to all believers that He is indeed the God of all grace, namely, His having effectually called them from death to life and having brought them out of nature's darkness into His own marvelous light. Nor is that all, for regeneration is but an earnest of what He has designed and prepared for them, since He has called them to His eternal glory. The realization of that truth moves the Apostle Peter to request that, following a season of testing and affliction, God would complete His work of grace within them. Herein we have it clearly implied that God will preserve His people from apostasy, will move them to persevere to the end, and, notwithstanding all the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil, will bring them safe to heaven.

The Supplicant's Experience of Restoring and Preserving Grace

First let us consider this prayer's supplicant. The one who approached God thus was Simon Peter. While Paul had much more to say about the grace of God than any other of the apostles, it was left to poor Peter to denominate Him "the God of all grace." We shall not have to seek far in order to discover the reason for this and its appropriateness. While Saul of Tarsus is the outstanding New Testament trophy of saving grace (for king Manasseh is an equally remarkable case in the Old Testament), surely it is Simon who is the most conspicuous New Testament example (David supplies a parallel under the Mosaic era) of the restoring and preserving grace of God. What is it that appears the greater marvel to a Christian, that most moves and melts his heart before God? Is it the grace shown to him while he was dead in sin, that which lifted him out of the miry clay and set him upon and within the Rock of ages? Or is it that grace exercised toward him after conversion that bears with his waywardness, ingratitude, departures from his first love, grievings of the Holy Spirit, dishonorings of Christ; and yet, notwithstanding all, loves him to the end and continues ministering to his every need? If the reader's experience be anything like mine, he will have no difficulty in answering.

Who but one who has been made painfully sensible of the plague within him, who has had so many sad proofs of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, and who has perceived something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin--not only in the light of God's holiness but as it is committed against the dying love of his Savior--can rightly estimate the sad fall of Peter? For he was not only accorded a place of honor among the twelve ambassadors of the King of glory, but was privileged to behold Him on the mount of transfiguration, and was one of the three who witnessed more than any others His agonies in the Garden. And then to hear him, a very short time afterwards, denying his Master and Friend with oaths! Who but one who has personally experienced the "longsuffering of God" (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9, 15), and has himself been the recipient of His "abundant mercy" (1 Peter 1:3), can really estimate and appreciate the amazing, infinite grace (1) that moved the Savior to look so sorrowfully yet tenderly upon the erring one as to cause him to go forth and "weep bitterly" (Luke 22:62), (2) that led Him to have a private interview with Peter after His resurrection (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5), and (3) that, above all, not only recovered His wandering sheep but restored him to the apostolate (John 21:15-17)? Well might Peter own Christ, together with the Father and the Spirit, as "the God of all grace"!

The Twin Duties of Christian Pastors

Secondly, let us ponder the setting of this prayer, for if we closely examine it we shall find that there is much to be learned and admired. Before entering into detail, let us observe the context generally. In the foregoing verses the apostle had been making a series of weighty exhortations. And since those in verses 6 through 9 are preceded by Peter's impressing upon the public servants of God their several duties (vv. 1-4), allow me to address a word to them first. Let all Christ's undershepherds emulate the example that is

here set before them. Having bidden believers to walk circumspectly, the apostle bent his knees and commended them to the gracious care of their God, seeking for them those mercies that he felt they most needed. The minister of Christ has two principal offices to discharge for those souls that are committed to his care (Heb. 13:17): to speak for God to them, and to supplicate God for them. The seed that the minister sows is not likely to produce much fruit unless he personally waters it with his prayers and tears. It is but a species of hypocrisy for him to exhort his hearers to spend more time in prayer if he be not a frequenter of the throne of grace. The pastor has only fulfilled half his commission when he has faithfully proclaimed all the counsel of God; the other part is to be performed in private.

The Twin Duties of Hearers and Students of God's Word

The same principle holds good equally for those in the pew. The most searching sermon will profit the hearer little or nothing unless it be turned into fervent prayer. So too with what we read! The measure in which God is pleased to bless these chapters to you will be determined by the influence they have upon you and the effects they produce in you--the extent to which they bring you to your knees in earnest supplication seeking power from the Lord. From exhortation the apostle turned to supplication. Let us do likewise, or we shall be left without the necessary strength to obey the precepts. To the various duties inculcated in the context was added this prayer for Divine enablement for the discharge of them, however arduous, and for the patient endurance of every trial, however painful. Observe, too, the blessed contrast between the assaults of the enemy in verses 8 and 9 and the character in which God is here viewed in verses 10 and 11. Is not that designed to teach the saint that he has nothing to fear from his vile adversary so long as he has recourse to Him in whom resides every kind of grace that is needed for his present walk, work, warfare, and witness? Surely this is one of the principal practical lessons to be drawn from this prayer as we view it in the light of its context.

Our Ability to Resist Satan Depends on Prayer

Unless we daily look to and cast ourselves upon "the God of all grace," it is certain that we shall never be able to "resist stedfast in the faith" our adversary the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (v. 8). And equally sure is it that Divine grace is needed by us if we are to "be sober, be vigilant." We need strengthening grace that we may successfully resist so powerful a foe as the devil; we need courage-producing grace if we are to do so steadfast in the faith; and we need patience-producing grace in order to meekly bear afflictions. Not only is every kind of grace available for us in God but every measure, so that when we find one exhausted we may obtain a fresh one. One of the reasons why God permits Satan to assail His people so frequently and so fiercely is that they may prove for themselves the efficacy of His grace. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Then let us bring to Him every pitcher of our needs and draw upon His inexhaustible fullness. Says F. B. Meyer, "The ocean is known by several names, according to the shores it washes, but it is the same ocean. So it is ever the same love of God, though each needy one perceives and admires its special adaptation to his needs."

The Remarkable Correspondence Between Peter's Experience and His Exhortation and Prayer

But, as Thomas Goodwin has shown, there is a yet more definite relation between this prayer and its context, and between both of them and the experience of Peter. The parallels between them are so close and numerous that they cannot be undesigned. In Gethsemane Christ bade His servant, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41), and in his Epistle Peter exhorts the saints, "be sober,

be vigilant." Previously, the Savior had warned him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31)-- and as the Puritan expressed it, "and shake forth all grace out of him." So in verse 8 Peter gives point to his call for sobriety and vigilance by saying, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." But in connection with the loving admonition Christ comforted him: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). As Goodwin points out, "Faith's not failing is Satan's foiling." Likewise, the Apostle Peter, in his exhortation, adds, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith"--the gift of faith, as Calvin expounds it. Though Peter's self-confidence and courage failed him, so that he fell, yet his faith delivered him from giving way to abject despair, as Luke 22:61, 62, shows.

Our Lord concluded His address to Simon by saying, "and when thou art converted [brought back, restored], strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32, brackets mine). Likewise, our apostle wrote, "knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (v. 9); and then he prayed that, after they had suffered awhile, the God of all grace would "perfect [or restore], stablish, strengthen, settle you [them]." He prayed for the same kind of deliverance for them as that which he himself had experienced. Finally, Goodwin observes that Christ, when strengthening Peter's faith against Satan, set His "But I have prayed for thee" over against the worst the enemy could do. Therefore Peter also, after portraying the adversary of the saints in his fiercest character--as "a roaring lion"--brings in by way of contrast these words: "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." He thereby assures them that God will be their Guardian, Establisher, and Strengtheners. If, notwithstanding his sad lapse, he was recovered and preserved to eternal glory, that is a sure pledge that all the truly regenerate will be also. How admirably Scripture (Luke 22) interprets Scripture (1 Peter 5)!

God's Choice of Instruments for Writing His Scriptures Amazingly Appropriate

Before passing on to our next section, let us note and admire how the particular instruments whom God employs as His penmen in communicating His Word were personally qualified and experientially fitted for their several tasks. Who but Solomon was so well suited to write the Book of Ecclesiastes? For he was afforded exceptional opportunities to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world, and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in them. He thereby provided a fitting background for the Song of Solomon, wherein a Satisfying Object is displayed. How appropriate was the selection of Matthew to be the writer of the first Gospel, for he was the only one of the Twelve who held an official position before his call to the ministry (a tax-gatherer in the employ of the Romans). He of the four Evangelists presents Christ most clearly in His official character as the Messiah and King of Israel. Mark, the one who ministered to another (2 Tim. 4:11), is the one chosen to set forth Christ as the servant of Jehovah. Who was so eminently adapted to write upon the blessed theme of Divine love (as he does throughout his Epistles) as the one who was so highly favored as to lean upon the bosom of God's Beloved? So here, Peter is the one who so feelingly styles the Deity "the God of all grace." And so it is today. When God calls any man to the ministry, He experientially equips him, qualifying him for the particular work He has for him to do.

That He Is "the God of All Grace" Is Uniquely a Gospel Truth

Thirdly, let us contemplate its Object: "The God of all grace." Nature does not reveal Him as such, for man has to work hard and earn what he obtains from her. The workings of Providence do not, for there is a stern aspect as well as a benign one to them; and, as a whole, they rather exemplify the truth that we reap

as we sow. Still less does the Law, as such, exhibit God in this character, for its reward is a matter of debt and not of grace. It is only in the Gospel that He is clearly made manifest as "the God of all grace." Our valuation of Him as such is exactly proportioned by our devaluation of ourselves, for grace is the gratuitous favor of God to the undeserving and ill-deserving. Therefore we cannot truly appreciate it until we are made sensible of our utter unworthiness and vileness. He might well be the God of inflexible justice and unsparing wrath to rebels against His government. Such indeed He is to all who are outside of Christ, and will continue so for all eternity. But the glorious Gospel discovers to hell-deserving sinners the amazing grace of God to pardon, and to cleanse the foulest who repent and believe. Grace devised the plan of redemption; grace executed it; and grace applies it and makes it effectual. Peter previously made mention of "the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10, ital. mine), for nothing less will avail for those who are guilty of "manifold transgressions" and "mighty sins" (Amos 5:12). The grace of God is manifold not only numerically but in kind, in the rich variety of its manifestations. Every blessing we enjoy is to be ascribed to grace. But the appellation "the God of all grace" is even more comprehensive; yea, it is incomprehensible to all finite intelligences. This title, as we have seen, is set over against what is said of the devil in verse 8, where he is portrayed in all his terribleness: as our adversary for malice; likened to a lion for strength; to a roaring lion for dread; described as walking about for unwearied diligence, "seeking whom he may devour" unless God prevent. How blessed and consolatory is the contrast: "But God"--the Almighty, the Self-sufficient and All-sufficient One--"the God of all grace." How comforting is the singling out of this attribute when we have to do with Satan in temptation! If the God of all grace be for us, who can be against us? When Paul was so severely tried by the messenger (angel) of Satan who was sent to buffet him, and he thrice prayed for its removal, God assured him of His relief: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9, ital. mine).

The God of All Grace: A Great Encouragement to Prayer

Though mention is made frequently in the Scriptures of the grace of God and of His being gracious, yet nowhere but in this verse do we find him denominated "the God of all grace." There is a special emphasis here that claims our best attention: not simply is He "the God of grace," but "the God of all grace." As Goodwin showed, He is "the God of all grace" (1) essentially in His own character, (2) in His eternal purpose concerning His people, and (3) in His actual dealings with them. God's people personally receive constant proof that He is indeed so; and those of them whose thoughts are formed by His Word know that the benefits with which He daily loads them are the out-workings of His everlasting design of grace toward them. But they need to go still farther back, or raise their eyes yet higher, and perceive that all the riches of grace He ordained, and of which they are made the recipients, are from and in His very nature. "The grace in His nature is the fountain or spring; the grace of His purposes is the wellhead, and the grace in His dispensations the streams," says Goodwin. It was the grace of His nature that caused Him to form "thoughts of peace" toward His people (Jer. 29:11), as it is the grace in His heart that moves Him to fulfil the same. In other words, the grace of His very nature, what He is in Himself, is such that it guarantees the making good of all His benevolent designs.

As He is the Almighty, self-sufficient and omnipotent, with whom all things are possible, so He is also an all-gracious God in Himself--lacking no perfection to make Him infinitely benign. There is therefore a sea of grace in God to feed all the streams of His purposes and dispensations that are to issue therefrom. Here then is our grand consolation: all the grace there is in His nature, which makes Him to be the "God of all grace" to His children, renders certain not only that He will manifest Himself as such to them, but guarantees the supply of their every need and ensures the lavishing of the exceeding riches of His grace

upon them in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7). Look then beyond those streams of grace of which you are now the partaker to the God-man, Jesus the Anointed One, who is "full of grace" (John 1:14), and ask for continual and larger supplies from Him. The straitness is in ourselves and not in Him, for in God there is a boundless and limitless supply. I beg you (as I urge myself) to remember that when you come to the mercyseat (to make known your requests) you are about to petition "the God of all grace." In Him there is an infinite ocean to draw upon, and He bids you come to Him, saying, "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. 81:10, ital. mine). Not in vain has He declared, "According to your faith be it unto you."

Only by Faith Can We Enjoy the God of All Grace

The Giver is greater than all His gifts, yet there must be a personal and appropriating faith in order for any of us to enjoy Him. Only thus can we particularize what is general. God is the God of all grace to all saints, but faith has to be individually directed toward God by me if I am to know and delight in Him for what He actually is. We have an example of this in Psalm 59, where David declared, "The God of my mercy shall prevent [or "anticipate"] me" (v. 10, ital. and brackets mine). There we find him appropriating God to himself personally. Observe, first, how David lays hold of the essential mercy of God, that mercy which is embedded in His very nature. He exults again in verse 17: "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy" (ital. mine). The God of all grace is my Strength. He is my God, and therefore the God of my mercy. I lay claim to Him as such; all the mercy there is in Him is mine. Since He is my God, then all that is in Him is mine. It was, after all, the mercy and grace that are in Him that moved Him to set His love upon me and to enter into covenant with me, saying, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7). Says Goodwin:

You [have] heard [it said], God is the God of all grace to the brotherhood; I tell thee, if any soul had all the needs that all the brotherhood have, if nothing would serve his turn, but all the grace of God that He hath for the whole, yea, in the whole of Himself, He would lay it out for thee. ...Poor soul, thou usest to say, this or that is my sin, and it is so; a grievous sin perhaps, and I am prone to it. And again, this is my misery; but withal, I beseech thee to consider, that God is the God of thy mercy, and that all the mercy in God, upon occasion, and for a need, is thine, and all upon as good a title as that sin is thine; for the free donation of God, and of His will, is as good a title as the inheritance of sin in thee.

Thus we see that God's mercy shall be employed on our behalf in our hour of need as though each of us were His only child. Just as surely as we had inherited the guilt and miseries of Adam's transgressions have we, who are in Christ, title to all of God's grace and mercy.

Furthermore, observe that David lays hold of the purposing mercy of God. Each individual saint has appointed and allotted to him that which he may call "my mercy." God has set apart in His decree a portion so abundant that it can never be exhausted either by your sins or your needs. "The God of all mercy shall prevent me." From all eternity He has anticipated and made full provision in advance for all my needs, just as a wise father has a medicine chest prepared with remedies for the ailments of his children. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24, ital. mine). What an amazing condescension it is that God should make this a characteristic of Himself, that He becomes the God of the mercy of every particular child of His!

Finally, let us lay hold of His dispensing mercy, that which is actually bestowed upon us moment by moment. Here, too, has the believer every occasion to say "The God of my mercy," for every blessing enjoyed by me proceeds from His hand. This is no empty title of His, for the fact that David's use of it is

recorded for us in Holy Writ ensures that He will make it good. When I use it in true faith and childlike dependence upon Him, He binds Himself to take care of my interests in every way. Not only is He my God personally, but also of my needs.

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