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The Healer of Broken Hearts

Framing the Flock, Part 8

1 Peter 5:10-11

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

In this world, we are faced with all kinds of highs and lows. Sometimes, the “low” times of life seem like it’s all there is. Suffering can feel as if it is unending and overwhelming. Because of sin, our world is fallen. With that, we experience pain and heartache. What Peter tells us is that God’s grace is enough. In fact, it is more than enough. God is the God of all grace (emphasis on “all”). Because of God’s grace, we can have peace, strength, and confidence because we are standing on our stable, firm foundation—God. He gives us all the grace we need to get through those trials and times of suffering.

Discussion Points:

There are four ways that God is the Healer for broken hearts. The first way is that God mends our hearts. He puts us back together when life has broken it into pieces.

- Life can throw us curveballs. What are some hard things that people face?
- Has God forgotten about those people who seem to be facing trial after trial?
- How has God shown that He is in fact the Mender of broken hearts?

The next two ways that God heals our hearts is by strengthening us and standing us on our feet.

- The Bible tells us that Christ is our Cornerstone. How does that picture put in perspective that God strengthens us and helps us stand?
- God uses suffering in our lives for our good and His glory. How have you seen in past or current trials in your life help you grow as a believer?
- We are not alone in our trials. God is with us. Have you ever doubted that? What does Scripture tell us about God’s involvement in our lives?

Discussion Guide Cont.

The final way that God is the Healer is by stabilizing us. He alone is the only One who can provide such a firm foundation.

- Any trial can make us feel as if our world is falling apart. How does God provide the firm foundation we need?
- God does provide a firm foundation for us. But if we don't have a proper view of who He is, we can doubt that He will do what He's promised. Name some of God's promises and how He has kept them.

In what ways have you seen God work in your life especially in times of suffering? How can you use those lessons learned to help others?

Gospel Connection:

The Gospel is so important when it comes to suffering. First, Christ had to suffer and die for us so we could have eternal life. Second, God uses suffering in our lives for our good and His glory. Suffering makes us complete. God uses suffering to refine us, grow us, and make us more like Him—sanctification. God makes the weak strong. We have an Advocate with the Father, and we should be so thankful that He is our Advocate and thankful that the Gospel allows us to call Him “Abba Father.” Our Heavenly Father mends our broken hearts and sets our feet on a firm foundation so that when any trial or suffering comes our way, we know who our great Healer is.

Practical Implications:

Think: Do you crumble during times of suffering, or do you rely on God for your strength and comfort? Do you rest in the God of all grace?

Pray: Ask God to help you depend on Him. Ask Him to reveal to you those times that you doubt. Ask Him for the strength to stand during those difficult times.

Do: Be thankful for the grace of God. Be thankful that He uses times of suffering to grow you. Don't waiver under the pressures and hard times of life. Stand firm in the One who provides your stable foundation.

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1 Peter 5:10-11

During a British conference on comparative religions, theological and ecclesiastical scholars had gathered from all around the world.

At one point, the question was raised about what made Christianity so unique. Some thought it was the fact that God had become a man, but other religions claimed that their gods appeared in human form. Some suggested that the resurrection from the dead was the unique feature of Christianity, but then other religious accounts claimed to offer people life after death.

As time passed, the debate grew even more heated. And at one point, one of the attendees, who was considered by many to be one of the great apologists of the 20th century heard the shouting.

His name was C.S. Lewis. He entered the room and asked, in good English form, “What is all the rumpus about?” His colleagues told him of their discussion about what made Christianity unique from all other religions. Lewis responded, “That’s easy . . . it’s grace . . . God’s unearned, unmerited favor. You cannot earn grace; you cannot do anything to deserve God’s grace.” It’s a multifaceted gift.ⁱ

In Phillip Yancey’s book entitled, What’s So Amazing About Grace, he adds to this thought when he writes, God’s grace is free, but it isn’t cheap – it cost the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Still, the notion of God’s love coming to us free of charge seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist has his eight-fold path to travel in hopes of entering bliss; the Hindu follows his doctrine of karma and hopes enough good karma will secure his eternal happiness; the Jew follows his covenants in hopes of being righteous with God; the Muslim tries to follow his code of law and religious ritual. Only Christianity dares to make God’s love unconditional . . . a gift of grace.

Phillip Yanceyⁱⁱ

God willingly and generously and daily loads us with the benefits of his grace.

In recent months, the stories that surrounded the life of J. Paul Getty have become well known. After graduating from Oxford University in 1913, he followed his father into the oil business and by 1957 was richest man in the entire world. But he was legendary for being stingy as well as wealthy.

For instance, at his English manor, located on 700 acres outside of London, he installed a pay phone so that guests would have to pay for any phone calls they made. Which could also mean that even John Paul Getty couldn’t afford AT&T.

In 1973, when his 16 year old grandson was kidnapped in Italy and held for a ransom of \$17 million, Getty refused to pay anything. Only later, when his grandson’s right ear was cut off by his captors and mailed to a Roman newspaper, did Getty give serious consideration to helping meet their demands. But even then, he was only willing to lend the ransom to his son at a rate of four percent interest. Wealthy, but stingy.

Paul, the Apostle, wrote to believers living in Ephesus that God isn’t stingy with the resources and riches of His grace . . . in fact. ***Paul wrote that God lavishes upon us His grace (Ephesians 1:8).***

His grace to us isn’t a stingy stream, it is a rushing Niagara Falls. In fact, the Apostle Peter wants us to stop and pause at this point. And here’s the point –

God operates in the life of the believer by grace

Take your copy of Peter’s first letter and if you turn to chapter 5, and look with me at the next verse in our exposition through this letter –

we're at *verse number 10* – and I want you to go to the middle part of the verse first, where Peter gives God a title that no other author in scripture uses.

Right in the middle of *verse 10*, Peter refers to God as –

... the God of all grace
1 Peter 5:10b

The Apostle Paul referred to God as *the God of all comfort* (2 Corinthians 1:3), but only here, in all the New Testament is God given the title, *the God of all grace*.

What this does is emphasize that God is the source and giver/dispenser of all grace – let's define grace as:

Grace: undeserved favor bestowed upon us in our unworthiness.ⁱⁱⁱ

The average Christian knows he's saved by the unearned grace of God, but the average Christian thinks he has to earn God's smile every day after that. That he has to be worthy of further grace. I mean, you went 6 days straight without missing devotions or yelling at anybody – maybe God will really love you now . . . I mean Heaven might even be up for grabs if you mess up badly enough.

No, no – God actually operates in the life of the believer on the basis of the overarching demonstration of His grace.

And I love the way Peter put it here in this unique New Testament title for God. He didn't just write that God is the God of grace . . . no, He is the God of all grace. It is limitless grace.

You were saved by grace . . . you can confess your sin to Him, through Christ, by grace . . . you are given the strength for every challenge, by means of His grace; Paul wrote, for His grace is indeed sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Satan's strategies will not succeed because God's grace will not fail.^{iv} In fact, Peter goes on to tie up that loose end, lest anyone wonder if God's grace will ever run out of gas. Notice the next phrase,

The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ.

1 Peter 5:10b

In other words, God's grace is going to take you from earth, all the way to the eternal glory demonstrated in Christ, the Sovereign, glorious Son of God.

God's call to you didn't just involve your salvation, it includes going all the way to Heaven. And you're going to end up in heaven one day because of God's unfailing, limitless, unceasing grace.

Imagine this – God's never-ending grace entitles you to share in His never-ending glory.

Okay, but hold the phone for a minute. If God is so gracious to the believer, why isn't the believer immune from suffering?

Why doesn't God build a protective wall around the Christian's life and hang a sign on the wall that reads, "Do not disturb."

For the same reason your trainer at the gym told you when you showed up . . . you had your new shoes on, you're little spandex outfit to hold everything in place – and then the pain began. And he said, "No pain . . . no gain." By the way, that's actually a fantastic spiritual principle.

You see, God not only operates in the life of the believer by grace – but here's the second point Peter wants to make –

God develops the life of the believer through suffering.

And Peter wants us to have the right perspective on it – so go back to the beginning of *verse 10* now;

After you have suffered a little while . . .
1 Peter 5:10a

Not, *if* you suffer for a little while, but *after* you have suffered...

Suffering for the believer isn't a surprise, it's a certainty. And have you learned from church history that some of God's greatest servants

suffered the greatest – disease, danger, difficulty, disability, the death of loved ones and on and on.^v

But don't miss this: Peter not only reminds the believer that it's a certainty, he also reminds us that it's temporary. After you have suffered *a little while* . . .

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and referred to suffering as ***our light and momentary troubles (2 Corinthians 4:17)***.

This from the man who was stoned nearly to death by angry mobs, shipwrecked more than once, beaten and flogged several times, had a price put on his head like a common criminal – and more (***2 Corinthians 11:25***). But that was ***light and momentary!***

When I was in High School, our gym teacher had a wooden paddle – you remember those days when teachers paddled their students? Are you that old? Our country is so much better off now that teachers can't do that anymore, right? It ruined all of us.

Well, my gym teacher's paddle was about 10 inches long . . . it was sanded smooth from years of application. And if I remember correctly, it had little holes drilled in it. Let me tell you, that paddle left an impression.

One day the locker room wasn't kept up to speed and he had warned us repeatedly . . . finally, he lined us all up at the door, on our way out to run laps – he just created this assembly line – we had to bend over, in our thin little gym shorts . . . touch our shoes and then, whack . . . and you were out the door . . . running laps, on fire for the Lord.

We'd talk about that whack for days . . . you remember that feeling – man that hurt . . . can you believe he did that . . . the locker room wasn't that messy . . . that wasn't fair. One smack and I still remember it to this day.

Can you imagine being beaten by rods three different times – pummeled by rocks until presumed dead? And not deserving any of it?

We tend to forget that the Apostle Paul was literally scarred from the top of his head . . . to his face . . . his arms . . . his hands, his back . . .

permanently marred by the beatings he'd received.

If Paul were to show up today and speak to us, we'd sit there for a few minutes trying to get past the scars on his face and hands.

And Paul might notice us staring and say with a smile – “Oh this . . . listen, this is light . . . and momentary!”

And Peter adds here, it only lasts for just a little while.

You see, when Paul and Peter set suffering against eternal glory on the scales of life, there was no contest. Glory was heavy . . . suffering was light.^{vi}

Paul wrote to the Roman believers, I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Romans 8:18

The Bible is always pressing our perspective into the future.

But the question remains . . . what about now? What about here and now? Well Peter has something to say about that too.

One author called this verse a flurry of forceful verbs.^{vii}

Peter lets us all in on something God is doing in us, here and now. To get the picture, you could read this text this way:

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace . . . will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Himself is placed in front, in the Greek text, for emphasis – in other words, God ***Himself*** is the one who is directly involved in perfecting, confirming, strengthening and establishing you.

So if you're ever wondering if God is involved in your life – and we tend to wonder that when trials unload in our lives – He is – ***Himself*** – involved.

Not because you're worthy, but because He's the God of all grace and He loves you in Christ, your Lord and Savior.

By the way, and I don't want to bore you with grammar, but you need to know that the original construction of these four verbs is not to be understood as entirely futuristic – as if to only mean, “God will one day confirm, strengthen, establish you . . . etc . . . after you've suffered on earth.”

Peter is telling us that while God will *complete* this process in the future, He will outfit you with them right now – even while you're in the midst of suffering through life for a little while.^{viii}

In light of that, I'm going to call these verbs, four ways God provides:

Healing for Broken Hearts

1. First of all, God mends your heart when life has broken it into pieces
Notice the first word – ***God Himself will perfect.***

Unfortunately, we immediately think of our perfected, glorified minds and bodies and think only of heaven.

But this is something God is doing right now in your life. This word appears 13 times in the New Testament and it means to put in order . . . to adjust or arrange.^{ix}

It's used Mark chapter 1 for mending fishing nets that had come apart. It was the common first century word for having a broken bone mended.^x

Is your life coming apart? Is your heart broken? Has suffering so battered your soul that it feels like no one knows and God certainly doesn't seem to be aware. And isn't suffering proof that He isn't?

Peter would say that suffering is actually proof He is involved – because where there is a broken heart there is the Divine Physician mending and sewing

“Like a seamstress who uses a needle to make way for the thread, God uses suffering to make way for the adjusting of our souls” as he sews back together our broken hearts.^{xi}

Why – because we earned it with just enough points to get God's attention? No . . . because

He is the God of all grace – and the healer of broken hearts.

2. Secondly, God puts strength in your character when suffering tries to break you down

Peter goes on to write: He himself will perfect . . . confirm you. The verb ***to confirm*** means to make firm or solid. You can render it steadfastness. This is the word Luke used for the Lord Jesus who ***set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).***

The Greek word (στηριζω) gives us our transliterated word steroids . . . which increase muscle strength and stamina as well as fight diseases when properly used.

Peter effectively says, you've actually been enrolled in a spiritual body building program – and the gymnasium is entitled suffering; and your personal trainer is God himself.

So Peter is actually telling us that instead of breaking us down, suffering puts our spiritual character on steroids . . . and God builds into our lives added strength and steadfast character.

The world, our own flesh and the devil want nothing more than to break you down . . . God intends to use that same suffering to build you up.

The third action verb highlights another principle – here it is:

3. God stands you on your feet when trials attempt to push you over

Peter writes: God will Himself perfect (mend), confirm (build up), ***strengthen*** you.

The word translated ***strengthen*** is a word found only here in this form in the New Testament. It means to place on a firm foundation.^{xii}

To stand you up securely – to anchor your life as the winds of affliction blow against your life.

Will it ever let up? And when you succumb to the winds of adversity and fall over – God sees where you fell . . . He's aware of your

crushed spirit . . . He sees your tears . . . He knows your weakness . . . He knows.

He is the God of all grace – and even now, although you might not feel like you’re being helped to stand once again – it doesn’t seem like you’re going anywhere positive . . . listen, you’re here today . . . you’re here right now. You’re listening to this text and this verse is no coincidence for where you are this very day.

This sermon from Peter is just one more way the God of all grace – the Healer of Broken hearts is saying to you that He is involved in your life – even now He planned this hour for you.

The devil – that wicked whisperer says – God isn’t interested in you . . . besides, you don’t deserve His attention.

God’s word answers, “Child of God, you have God’s maximum attention, and it has nothing to do with deserving it – it has everything to do with His grace which is sufficient for you – borne out of His love for you as one of His children.

I came across this recently . . . when you send a letter to the president of the United States, it first passes through the Secret Service who opens them and inspects them. Then they’re passed along to The Office of Presidential Correspondence.

This office was founded under President McKinley in 1897 to help his administration answer 100 letters that arrived for him per day. By the time Herbert Hoover was president, the office was receiving 800 letters daily. Today the President of the United States gets tens of thousands of letters and emails every day.

Those who write in know that the president himself will most likely never see their message. But someone does. The Director of Presidential Correspondence at the White House, along with 45 staff members, 35 interns, and 300 volunteers, read thousands of letters sent to the President every day. During his eight years in the office, one former president specifically requested to receive ten letters to read every night.

So staff and interns and volunteers dig through the letters and emails and figure out which ones to pass up the chain to the Director, who personally reads around 300 letters per day. Once 10 letters are chosen, they’re handed off to someone who scans them, then passes them to another person who puts them together for the president’s nightly reading.^{xiii}

And I can imagine that those 10 letters will not be filled with disturbing messages that would ruin the president’s sleep.

The average Christian goes through life as if his needs and requests and petitions are probably never going to make it into the Oval Office of Heaven . . . there’s some angelic screening process that only makes room for important correspondence.

Then there’s that angelic Director of Heavenly Correspondence, along with a few million angel readers who sift through millions of daily petitions and then choose a handful that are really significant enough to require the God of the Universe’s attention.

But **God Himself** is directly involved in your life, Peter writes. Mail comes directly to Him.

God not only:

- mends your heart when life has broken it into pieces
- He puts strength in your character when suffering tries to break you down
- He stands you on your feet when trials attempt to push you over

4. Fourth, God stabilizes your life when trials attempt to destroy your foundation.

Peter writes, but God himself will perfect (mend), confirm (build up), strengthen (stand up), – now notice – and God Himself will establish you.

The verb **to establish** literally refers to laying a firm foundation. It has the idea here of placing your feet on a firm foundation.^{xiv}

Peter isn’t being redundant here . . . he’s adding nuances with each word to what the God of all grace is doing in your life – not just when

you get to heaven, but here and now, on planet earth.

The foundation under you might seem like it's been crumbling – or shifting – or trembling – like a building in an earthquake.

But God Himself is promising to give you the support you need. You could understand Peter's verb to mean – ***God Himself will settle you.***

Suffering has a way of taking the props out from underneath us which were counterfeit foundations to begin with. They were props made of cardboard.

But suffering stripped it all down to what it really was – and guess what we discovered? We discovered what mattered . . . we discovered that ***underneath us are the everlasting arms of God (Deuteronomy 33).*** Everything else is papier-mâché.

He is the bedrock of our lives – ***He is my rock . . . I will not be shaken (Psalm 62).***

But He is not impersonal granite – He is our personal God, involved . . . adjusting . . . mending . . . hearing . . . healing our broken hearts.

So how do you respond to the God of all grace? You do what Peter does – you start singing.

Peter breaks into a doxology – a hymn text that the early church will sing. Notice the lyrics in ***verse 11.***

To Him be dominion forever and ever, Amen
1 Peter 5:11

Peter knew what he was singing – it will become nothing less than treason to the Emperor Nero.

The Roman Caesar claimed for himself this word, ***dominion***. And they had every reason to believe they were indeed dominating the known world.

Nero sat in godlike splendor in a marble palace at the heart of the world – all roads led to Rome. The tribute and tax of the world flowed into his coffers. One word from him and armies mobilized and kingdoms toppled and new domains were added to his dominion. Ten thousand slaves ministered to his own personal wants and whims.^{xv} If anybody had dominion, it was him – dominion was for Caesar!

And Peter says – not exactly . . . I know this little song . . . it goes like this . . . dominion is for our God who reigns forever – even when the empires of the world seem to be in dominion, and suffering seems to be dominating . . . dominion actually belongs to Him.

And where is Roman Empire today – I'll tell you where it is – it's in your history books . . . because it is history.

Peter adds to these lyrics – purposefully and strategically – words with incredible hope especially to those with hurting hearts . . . no matter what it seems or what it looks like, ***to Him belongs dominion*** – how long?

Forever and ever which means back then, and now, and into the future forever and ever and ever and ever without end.

And what do you say about that? Peter adds that final confirmation – Amen! Which means, so be it – it's true . . . we confirm it together.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 06/17/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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- i Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Hopeful: First Peter (David C Cook, 1982), p. 9
- ii Adapted from Wiersbe's quotation of Yancey, p. 10
- iii D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1984), p. 317
- iv Adapted from John Phillips, Exploring the Epistles of Peter (Kregel, 2005), p. 202
- v Adapted from J. Allen Blair, Living Peacefully: 1 Peter (Kregel, 1959), p. 250
- vi Derek Cleave, 1 Peter (Christian Focus, 1999), p. 162
- vii David R. Helm, 1-2 Peter and Jude (Crossway, 2008), p. 172
- viii Adapted from R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude (Augsburg Publishing, 1966), p. 228
- ix Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 766
John Phillips, p. 203
- x William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 273
- xi Adapted from Phillips, p. 203
- xii Hiebert, p. 319
- xiii *Adapted from 99% Invisible blog, "Ten Letters for the President" (11-7-16)*
- xiv Adapted from Hiebert, p. 319
- xv Phillips, p. 204