

September 15, 2019

When the Going Gets Tough

Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

The secret was that they knew God.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones
20th century Welsh preacher

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers... And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 1:14, 2:42

It is not wrong, of course, to ask God to remove hardship, suffering, or trial (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8). Sometimes, however, the Lord in his wisdom and goodness, sees fit to call his children to undergo protracted trials. How do we pray then? We should pray that God would equip us for and make us faithful in all that he has called us to be and to do.

Guy Prentiss Waters
NT scholar

...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:17-20

In a time of threat, prayer can be a rediscovery of the sovereign God who wins by letting our opponents win and then transforming the expected result. This rediscovery can keep God's witnesses faithful in spite of threats.

Robert Tannehill
NT scholar

And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."

Isaiah 37:15-20

It is the church that is willing to die to worldly standards that will know the power of Christ's resurrection. It may be envied for its depth of loving relationships, or for its spontaneous joy. It may be hated and persecuted for its revolutionary lifestyle, exposing the hollow values and destructive selfishness of the society it seeks to serve: but it certainly cannot be ignored.

A. W. Tozer
20th century pastor and author

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Elder: Remember to extol God's work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar.

People: Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

Job 36

Elder: For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea.

People: For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises.

We proclaim the greatness of our God

"Immortal, Invisible"

1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise; in
 2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light; nor
 3. Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light, thine

5
 light in - ac - ces - si - ble, hid from our eyes; most
 want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might; thy
 an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight; all

9
 bles - sed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days, Al -
 jus - tice like moun - tains, high soar - ing a - bove; thy
 praise we would ren - der; O help us to see 'tis

13
 migh - ty, vic - tor - ious, thy great name we praise!
 clouds which are the foun - tains of good - ness and love.
 on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee.

We worship because it is what we were made to do. At no other time are we more human, more alive, more complete than when we approach our God in the wonder of who he is.

GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

God declares what he requires and our failure to do it

Deuteronomy 10

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD...? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

1 John 1, 2

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us...And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

A full prayer of confession acknowledges that our sin is more than an isolated example of bad judgment; it is a way of life. Sin is our response to God—fleeing from him and running to other things. We confess that we are sinful people, and we live in need of a Savior.

We confess the truth: our sin

O God of grace,
in Jesus Christ you have become our sin
that we might become your righteousness.
You have clothed us with a bridegroom's robe,
and decked us with jewels of holiness.
But in our Christian walk we are still in rags;
our best prayers are stained with sin;
our penitential tears are so much impurity;
our confessions of wrong are so many aggravations of sin.
We repent of our repentance.

We have no robe to bring to cover our sins,
no loom to weave our own righteousness;
We stand always clothed in filthy garments,
and by grace are always receiving a change of raiment.
We continually go into the far country,
always returning home as prodigals,
always saying, "Father, forgive me,"
and you are always bringing forth the best robe,
the robe of Christ's righteousness.
Every morning let us wear it,
every evening return in it,
go out to the day's work in it,
be married in it,
be found in death in it,
stand before the great white throne in it,
and enter heaven in it shining as the sun.

Thank you, Father, for the celebration that attends
our being found by your grace.
May we rejoice with you
at the finding of each lost sheep,
each lost coin,
at every prodigal that comes home
and receives new raiment from you.
Draw us into that heavenly celebration
through Jesus Christ,
the good shepherd who found us.
Amen.

God declares his mercy and grace displayed in love in Jesus Christ

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us... For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Psalm 103
John 3

As we confess our sins to him God shows the depth of his love for us by reminding us of his answer for our sin—Jesus Christ. His coming to us—his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection—are the ultimate display of love.

The Bible says that all people are sinners, fleeing from God. But in Jesus Christ we find peace and healing. In his death on the cross, he took our sin and paid the price for it. And so we come to him in faith, confessing our sin and need for him, trusting in his death alone to bring us life.

We fall down at the feet of the Lamb, the love of God for us made visible

"Poor Sinner, Dejected with Fear"



1. Poor sin - ner de - ject - ed with fear, un - bos - om thy mind to the
 2. Come just as you are with thy woe; fall down at the feet of the
 3. The soul that on Je - sus re - lies, he'll nev - er, no nev - er de -



4 Lamb; no wrath on his brow - he does wear, nor
 Lamb; he will not, he can - not say, "Go," but
 ceive; he free - ly and faith - ful - ly gives more



7 will he poor mourn - ers con - demn. His arm of om - ni - po - tent
 sure - ly will take out thy stain. A foun - tain is o - pened for
 bless - ings than we can con - ceive. Yea, down to old age he will



10 grace is a - ble and will - ing to save; a
 sin, and thou - sands and its vir - tues have proved; he'll
 keep, nor will he for - sake us at last; he



13 sweet and a per - ma - nent peace he'll free - ly and
 take thee and plunge thee there - in, and wash thee from
 knows and is known by his sheep; they're his and he will

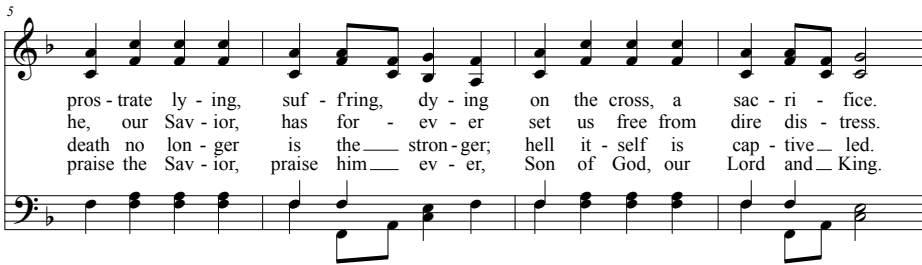


16 faith - ful - ly give.
 filth _____ in his blood.
 hold _____ them fast.

"Praise the Savior, Now and Ever"



1. Praise the Sav-ior, now and ev - er; — praise him, — all be - neath the skies;
2. Man's work fail-eth, Christ's a - vail - eth; — he is — all our righ-teous-ness;
3. Sin's bond sev-ered, we're de - liv - ered; Christ has — bruised the ser-pent's head;
4. For his — fa - vor, praise for - ev - er, — un - to — God the Fa - ther sing;



5
pros - trate ly - ing, suf - fring, dy - ing on the cross, a sac - ri - fice.
he, our Sav - ior, has for - ev - er set us free from dire dis - tress.
death no lon - ger is the — stron - ger; hell it - self is cap - tive — led.
praise the Sav - ior, praise him — ev - er, Son of God, our Lord and — King.



9
Vic - t'ry — gain - ing, life ob - tain - ing, — now in — glo - ry he doth rise!
Through his — mer - it we in - her - it — light and — peace and hap - pi - ness.
Christ has — ris - en from death's pri - son; o'er the — tomb he light has shed.
Praise the — Spi - rit; through Christ's mer - it — he doth — us sal - va - tion bring.

Who is to
condemn? Christ
Jesus is the one
who died—more
than that, who was
raised—who is at
the right hand of
God, who indeed
is interceding for
us.

Romans 8

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

Acts 4:23-31

²³When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

"Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'—

²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Sermon

Rev. Per Almquist

When the Going Gets Tough

The Church that God Built

Scripture is the ongoing rapport between heaven and earth, between Christ and his church, between God and his children. It does not just tie us to the past; it binds us to the living Lord in the heavens. It is the living voice God.

Herman Bavinck

We seek God that we may see him sovereign and active, working his glory in us in every situation

“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”

1. Our God, our help in a - ges past, our
 2. Un - der the shad - ow of your throne your
 3. Be - fore the hills in or - der stood, or
 4. A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are
 5. Our God, our help in a - ges past, our

4
 hope for years to come, our shel - ter from the
 saints have dwelt se - cure; suf - fi - cient is your
 earth re - ceived her frame, from ev - er - last - ing
 like an eve - ning gone; short as the watch that
 hope for years to come: O be our guard while

7
 storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:
 arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.
 you are God, to end - less years the same.
 ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.
 trou - bles last, and our e - ter - nal home.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
 Psalm 90

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

We live boldly, resting in our sovereign God as we give our tithes and offerings to him

We give our offerings to God as a public demonstration of our faith, putting our money where our mouths are. In this action we show what we claim, that our lives are organized around God and lived for him instead of ourselves.

We seek God that we may see him in every circumstance and that he would enable us to live boldly and faithfully for his glory

During this time we live in faith, trusting in the power of his grace, placing our lives and our church in his hands.


We ask that he would work in us and through us for his glory.

Prayer is the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and of our dependence on Him to act on our behalf.
Jerry Bridges

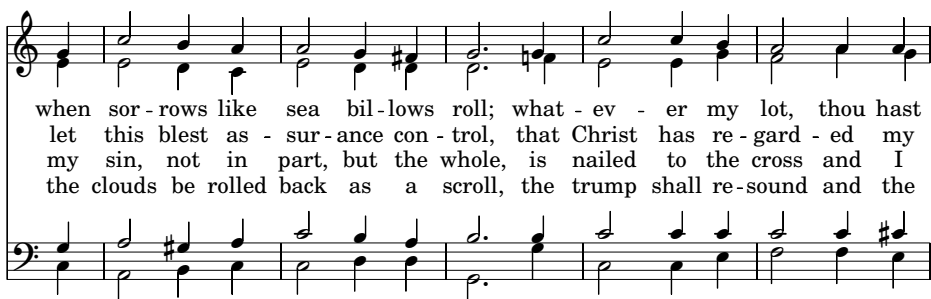
God responds to our seeking him in Jesus with his presence in the Lord's Supper

We celebrate God's free grace to us in Jesus Christ by observing the Lord's Supper each Sunday. We invite to the Lord's Table all those who are baptized followers of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and his body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the cup with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging to our church that you are in covenant with God. You also acknowledge that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you have any doubts about your participation, please speak to one of the elders after the service. Wine and bread are the elements of the supper as instituted by Jesus Christ and so we follow his example.

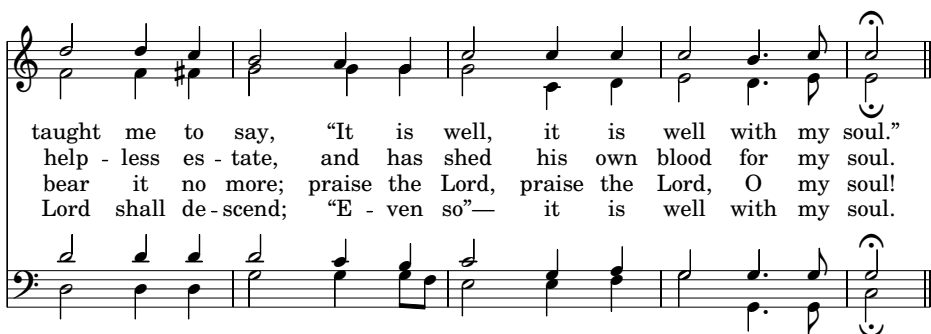
"It is Well with My Soul"



1. When peace, like a riv - er, at - tend - eth my way,
2. Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, though tri - als should come,
3. My sin— O the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought!—
4. O Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,



when sor - rows like sea bil - lows roll; what - ev - er my lot, thou hast
let this blest as - sur - ance con - trol, that Christ has re - gard - ed my
my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll, the trump shall re - sound and the



taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."
help - less es - tate, and has shed his own blood for my soul.
bear it no more; praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
Lord shall de - scend; "E - ven so"— it is well with my soul.

REFRAIN



It is well with my soul; it is well, it is well with my soul.
It is well with my soul;

A sacrament is a sign of participation in saving grace. It marks the presence and work of God in those who seek him through Jesus Christ enabling them to live boldly and faithfully for him.

GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

We rest in the never failing love of our sovereign Lord at work

"His Love Can Never Fail"

1.I do not ask to see the way my feet will have to tread, but
2.And if my feet would go a - stray, they can - not, for I know that
3.I will not fear, though dark - ness come a - broad o'er all the land, if

6 on - ly that my soul may feed up - on the liv - ing Bread. 'Tis
Je - sus guides my fal - t'ring steps as joy - ful - ly I go. And
I may on - ly feel the touch of his own lov - ing hand. And

10 bet - ter far that I should walk by faith close to his side; I
though I may not see his face, my faith is strong and clear that
though I trem - ble when I think how weak I am, and frail, my

14 may not know the way I go, but oh, I know my Guide. Refrain: His
in each hour of sore dis - tress my Sav - ior will be near.
soul is sat - is - fied to know his love can nev - er fail.

18 love can nev - er fail, his love can nev - er fail;

22 my soul is sat - is - fied to know his love can nev - er fail;

26 my soul is sat - is - fied to know his love can nev - er fail.

I have loved you
with an everlasting
love; therefore I
have continued
my faithfulness to

you.
Jeremiah 31

God declares he is active, working in us for his glory in the face of every circumstance

Leader: [And he says to you] "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore boast all the more gladly of your weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon you. For the sake of Christ, then, be content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when you are weak, then you are strong.

People: Amen

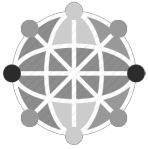
Please stay and join us for a time of refreshment and enjoying each other's company.

*This is a time to share in life together as the gospel calls us
as we reconnect with those we know and as we meet someone new.*



Welcome to Free Grace

We are a broken church full of broken people. We know we need God's free grace. Some of us have accepted this grace, some are exploring what it's all about. All of us are still trying to understand it. We are a church that seeks to proclaim this free grace of God with both our words and our lives. Not satisfied with simply talking about it, we want to live it out. We invite you to come, explore, and live God's free grace with us.



Our Connections

Free Grace is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a family of churches that seeks to be faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Our Leadership

Free Grace is lead by her elders, men called by God and set apart by the church to care and lead her as individual members, families, and as a whole. Our elders are:

Rev. Per Almquist (pastor)
Brian Cosgrove
Ken Morris



Credits

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Dan Crawford, *voice*; Joanne Crosby, *flute*; Beth Almquist, *piano*; Scotty Almquist, *piano*

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The apostles' response to struggles:
to seek God, because they saw him
at work, that they may live faithfully
for him. My response to struggles: to
seek God, so that I can complain,
because I can't see him at work
taking it all away that I have a
comfortable life.

broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory