

# Standing in Grace

*Understanding Grace*

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**Bible Text:** Romans 5:1-11

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## **Faith Church**

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Good morning again. Pastor Viars is serving the Lord in the Dominican Republic. This weekend he is teaching a conference and I'm sure it's really, really difficult there with the weather down in the Dominican Republic so we'll be praying for him. But it's our hope that this conference that we see in the Dominican Republic will be similar to the training we're seeing in Brazil and the church global being strengthened because of the sufficiency of God's word.

Now last Sunday, Pastor Viars explained our new annual theme "Finding Grace" and it's based on Hebrews 4:14-16 and so we've been focused on this year our theme particularly being on grace and our first series is "Understanding Grace" so I hope that at the end of this sermon, the idea is that you will understand grace a little bit better. And each sermon throughout the whole year, we're just going to understand God and his grace a little bit better and better and better. And then as we apply it to our everyday life, we're going to understand him more and more and more, particularly I hope that we take away from today is understanding the stability that grace provides. I think many of us would attest to the importance of stability. Has anybody had the experience in the last week of walking without stability? Has anybody experienced the ice and the snow this past week and just, have you done this, you know what I'm talking about, you're walking with the wide base, you're looking down. Has anybody fallen yet? Would you admit it if you did? I was taking my garbage out to the end of the street and I started to basically slalom and just go down in an almost uncontrolled fashion, just sliding down and I was thinking to myself a number of things: 1, don't fall and crack your head open. 2. Don't throw your back out not falling. 3. Please, Lord, let me not spread the trash all over the street. And I will admit that was the one I was most focused on because I didn't want to have to clean it up.

Now, I grew up in North Dakota. I know many of you know that and we walked on ice all the time and in high school, there was a particular shoe that was very, very popular. Man, do you know what Doc Martens are? They have those in Indiana too? Okay, great. Well, Doc Martens, if you've ever worn them on ice, it's like a plastic sled on your feet. It's plastic soles and these leather shoes were all the rage so every kid wore them and every kid fell down. It was fascinating just to see how unstable those shoes were. And we've all had those, ladies, I imagine walking on high heels on ice is really, really difficult but we've all had the experience of not standing on solid footing and having the

dread of insecurity of, "I don't want to fall. I don't walk with confidence because I don't want to get hurt. I can't focus on where I'm going, I'm focusing on the 6 inches right in front of me and I'm not even secure in those 6 inches." Even some in our church family have fallen and gotten hurt. I know Doc Smith has taken a tumble in years past and gotten hurt. Jim Harris has gotten hurt so, you know, it's not a laughing matter, it's a scary thing for sure that we just don't look forward to many times. As a side note, we're trying to make sure our entrances are as safe as possible. We want to grow in that area.

Now, on the flip side, if you've got some really good shoes, I'm talking about the galoshes you put on with metal spikes, that's what I'm talking about. Have you ever seen those before? Well, you can put those on and have a level of stability even in the slickest of slick conditions. You can actually even enjoy the winter. They actually make them so that you can go running and jogging on the ice. I don't know why you'd want to do that in the wintertime but they make them.

Now, think about that illustration but from a spiritual perspective: imagine going through life with a level of uncertainty that's likened unto going through winter all year long wearing Doc Martens. Just think of all the instability. And you have to realize that many people go through life with that instability even though there is no ice in sight. They go through life walking in the midst of a sin-cursed world full of trials and temptations and worries and fears with great instability as though they can barely stand up and are going to fall at any time. And if we're honest, sometimes that's what the Christian life feels like. But there is grace to be found that provides a stability better than the best winter shoes that money can buy and that's why this morning we're going to be talking about standing in grace. We're going to talk about the blessings that come from grace, that give us confidence and rejoicing.

So let's turn, if you will, to Romans 5:1 through 11 to focus on standing in grace. That's on page 121 in the Bible under the chair in front of you. Follow along with me, if you will. Romans 5, starting in verse 1,

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having

been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

That's a powerful verse. Before I get too deep into it, I need to explain a few matters. The very first phrase of the text, "Therefore, having been justified by faith" is very important. It really is the starting point of all of the blessings that we're going to talk about. And justification is one of those big words that is sometimes hard to define so let me tell you a little story to help. I heard a story about a lawyer from Texas. His name, get this, was Racehorse Ames. Now, isn't that an amazing name for a defense attorney from Texas? Racehorse Ames. And he was being interviewed because at that point in time in history, he had never lost a case, never lost a case in court and the reporter asked him if he asked his clients whether or not they committed the crime. He said, "No, it's my job to present the facts of the case in the best possible light for the client." And not dissuaded by this answer, the reporter asked, "Was there ever a time where you found out," and Racehorse, I just love saying that, he said there was. In a case, the jury returned and read their verdict, not guilty, and the judge asked the client if there was anything that he would like to say in court and the client said he would so he stood up and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I would like to thank you for declaring me not guilty and I promise I will never do it again."

You see, they declared him not guilty when he was guilty and they made a mistake but justification is declaring us innocent when we really are guilty but it's not a mistake. Justification is the judicial act of God where he declares the sinner to be innocent and imputes or brings on the righteousness of Christ on their account legally so they get to walk out from under the punishment. It's not a mistake, it's a gracious act of God. That's justification. It's very, very, very important because everything else hinges upon being legally declared innocent before God. It's clear that the promises of Romans 5 that we're going to talk about are not for everyone. They are for those who have been justified. That's the Gospel and if you have not come to a place where God has said to you, "You're guilty but I'm going to declare you innocent because you have placed your faith and trust in my Son's provision, taking the penalty in your place so that you are now under, out from under the punishment that you deserve. You're guilty but I'm going to declare you innocent." If God has never done that in your life, if you have not come to him saying, "I'm guilty. Please forgive me. Declare me innocent," I would invite you to do that even today, even in this moment. And if you have questions, I would love to talk to you about that because all of the blessings hinge upon that. And you look at a verse in Romans 3:28 that is so powerful that says, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law." You can't be justified in and of your own works. You need to be justified by faith in God's provision in Christ.

Now, it's also important to note that being justified is roughly equivalent to the phrase in the text "the grace in which we stand." If we stand in grace, it's because we've been justified. It is referring to a believer's condition, "I've been declared innocent. I'm in the condition of standing in grace." This is the solid foundation that a Christian lives on, the foundation of grace and Jesus taught that you either build your house on the rock and we

sang about that and God is often described as our rock or you build it on the sand. One provides stability and security, the other does not. As I read the passage, you also heard the word "exult" 3 times. Over and over again we get exult, exult, exult. The term is actually also the word for "boast" so you could say, boast, boast, boast but the boasting is not in ourselves so when you translate the word "exult" it's to draw our attention to confidence and rejoicing that we have in God and so the passage describes 3 blessings of justification, the blessings of standing in the position of grace. And the blessings are associated with having our firm foundation and stability so that we can have confidence and rejoicing so that's what we're going to talk about, the 3 blessings of standing in grace that results in confidence and rejoicing.

So the first one we see in the text in verse 1: the blessing of standing in grace is that we have peace with God. Romans 5:1-2 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand." You see, the Bible speaks about peace all the time. It often talks about peace and so there are several different kinds of peace. There is an inner peace that God gives you in the midst of an experience where you can believe, for example that, "God will use this experience in my life. I can believe that God is at work, that he is going to use this experience regardless of whether or not I like it. I can have peace that God will use it for his glory and my good even when it is difficult." There is also a peace that exists between people and we encourage, we are encouraged to live at peace, that is, without conflict with one another. Then there is a peace between us and God. That is the one that's referred to here in this text and that peace refers to being in a right standing with God, being positionally right with God.

Now, in order to understand and appreciate and rejoice in this peace, we need to consider the latter part of the passage that I read where we find what our status used to be. You see, God made a way for us to be at peace with him even though we were sinners. Look at verses 6 and 8 in your Bible and think about the words that are described in those passages. Look at the words that describe how we were before we had peace with God. Verse 6 says that we were helpless and ungodly. Here's a great motivational speech, you know, "You are helpless and ungodly." This is our position. This is who we were. Verse 8 says that we were sinners and verse 10 takes it to a whole other level, not only were we sinners, not only were we helpless, not only were you ungodly, you were God's enemy. You were an enemy of God. You see, our sinful, helpless, ungodly, rebellious nature against God is the perfect backdrop to communicate the nature of God's graciousness, what he is like. Verse 7 in the text explains that: our nature and God's nature are very, very different. Verse 7 says that we as humans might die for someone who is really good, that's our nature. God's nature is very different: he is full of grace and he dies for his enemies, for those who are helpless, those who are ungodly, those who are sinners. Look at verse 8, he didn't just tell us this is what he is like, he showed us this is what he is like, but God demonstrated, he showed us, he manifested his character, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He didn't sacrifice himself for us after we cleaned up our act, he died for us while we were sinners, helpless, ungodly, his enemies. He didn't just say it, he showed it. This

demonstration of his love provides us the opportunity to be justified, to have peace with God, to stand in grace.

This passage explains even more significant reasoning for rejoicing and appreciation. We have peace with God even though we were under the wrath of God. You see, God doesn't ignore the fact that mankind rebels against his sovereign rule. As their Creator, he doesn't just ignore it or pretend that it's not there. He as the standard of the universe realizes and knows our rebellion but instead, he provides a way to be saved, a path to be saved from the wrath that we are under as his enemies. You see, it's really important to understand there are only 2 paths. There is either the path that goes through the cross or the path that goes around the cross. There are only 2 paths. One is a path of peace and one is a path of wrath. In order to understand and rejoice in the path of peace, we need to understand the path of wrath is the default path that everybody is on and it is terrible. If you've read any books about Holocaust survivors or prisoners of war, you know that there are horrific conditions that people have had to live under, suffer through and be under the wrath of other human beings yet as horrible and awful as those accounts are, there is something worse, that's the wrath of God and we need to look at the reality of that in order to rejoice in being rescued from it.

So I'd like you to turn with me to Revelation 14 to get a picture of this reality. The very back of your Bible, Revelation 14. We're going to come back to Romans 5. Look at verse 9 of Revelation 14. I'm going to read through verse 11. Just soak in the image here. You see the unbeliever, the one who does not know God, who is not justified, who owns the mark of the beast, doesn't relish in the lost position and many people think that hell is just a drunken party. "If that's where all the fun people are, that's where I want to go." Many people say that tongue-in-cheek but the Word describes a situation that is very, very different. Look at verse 9, "Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.'" This is a terrible picture.

Go back to Romans 5 as you see on page 122, we see verse 9 when it says, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." This protection, this rescue only comes through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Biblical Christianity is unapologetically exclusive. There is one path to peace. There are not many paths to heaven, just one, and only through Jesus Christ. And hell is not a party. It is the full measure of God's wrath poured out forever and ever and ever so what that means is peace with God that rescues you from this terrible wrath and torment forever is a huge blessing. It is an amazing blessing. It provides an amazing level of stability and a rejoicing in the believer's life who compares the terribleness of the wrath with the graciousness of the rescue. I hope in your hearts in this moment right now, there is a level of rejoicing when you compare those 2 things and I hope that rejoicing produces

confidence in your walk with Christ this week. I hope this truth causes you to praise the Lord in your hearts. I pray that it impacts every second of your life where you stand in amazement of the God who not only provides a way of peace but sends his Son to make that peace possible and pours the wrath of himself onto his Son that you deserve for all eternity. I hope that results in rejoicing and praise and a humble awe of God's love for you that you don't deserve one iota of. I think we struggle to appreciate justification when we don't focus on what we've been justified from, the wrath of God.

Friends, if you've trusted Christ, you have the privilege of standing in grace. You have the privilege of having peace with God. The King of the universe is not your enemy. That is good news and now your relationship with the Lord is characterized by peace when it once was characterized by wrath. That is grace. That is blessing that leads us to confidence and rejoicing. And Paul just has to continue this focus on grace and the more blessings that come from it. Blessing number 2 is that not only are we saved from the wrath of God and we have peace, but now we have a hope that we will dwell in the future glory of God. Again, we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace which we say, here it is: we exult, we boast in the hope of the glory of God. We exult in the hope of the glory of God. Paul's focus moves from the condition that we once were in to the condition we will experience in the future. He rejoices in and has confidence in the grace that we stand that results in peace but also produces this amazing future we can look forward to and be confident in. Again, when Paul uses the term "exult" or "boast," he's not talking about a prideful athlete pounding their chest saying how great they are. He is saying that we have something to exult in and rejoice and exult in because we have confidence that the future is amazing, is wonderful, and the Bible often talks about our future and Paul often longs for it in his writings to the churches.

How often do you long for heaven? How often do your thoughts just go to, "What's it going to be like being in the presence of God forever?" Do your trials lead you to think about heaven? Write down 2 Corinthians 4:17 in your notes. Don't turn there, I just want you to listen to this passage. I'd like you to maybe review it later but 2 Corinthians 4:17 says, "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." There are things we can't see. Do we hope and look forward to them or are we consumed with the here and now? It's not good for us to be too caught up with only with what's right in front of us, we need to be thinking about what is to come.

You know, it's funny because there is a TV show that helped me think about this. Trish and I have been watching this show called "Tiny House Nation." Have you guys ever heard of that? The tiny house movement. Where people downsize to build their houses on a trailer and live in 200 square feet. Part of the show is just fascinating when they lay out all of their belongings from their big house and pare it down to move to their tiny house and you see this connection with their goods which is just, it's really hard for them to think about giving these things up and I look at this and I think, "Wow, this is amazing how emotional they're getting to these things." I recognize, okay, if I were moving to 200

square feet, I'm sure that my attachment to this world would be really, really evident but in a sense, don't all of us need to downsize our hearts to how much we focus on, appreciate and cling to the things of this world, how much they mean to us? Don't we have to downsize our hearts in the things of this world so that we can long for heaven all the more?

I read a passage that shows you the terrible wrath that we have been rescued from. I want to show you a passage that also helps us meditate on how wonderful it's going to be. Look again at Revelation. Go back to the back of your Bible. Look at chapter 22. Look at the first 5 verses in Revelation. Again, we're going to go back to Romans 5 but look at Revelation chapter 22. Now listen and just get the flavor and think about the contrast between the wrath of God and the hope of being with God in a condition of peace. Revelation 22:1-5, "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever." Isn't that a stark picture to the wrath of God? That is wonderful and that is why we can exult and boast in the hope of the glory of God. You see, exulting and boasting in the future with confidence is opposite of being uncertain and shaky and despairing because we have something to be excited about, something to be confident in and God preserved his truth in the Scripture for you and for me so that we would read it, we would have something to boast in, to have stability and confidence in this life.

Look at verse 11 back in Romans 5. Romans 5:11 says, "And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." We're reconciled to God. We are brought into a right relationship with him and he is preparing a wonderful place for us to dwell with him forever if we've been justified by faith in the blood of his Son that he shed for us. This confidence that we're to have comes from knowing what is ahead, knowing what is to come. That is the hope of the glory of God, the glory of his presence that one day we're going to be in heaven and we have no idea how amazing the presence of God will be but we know we can look forward to it and it is much better than here and now. It's going to be unlike anything we've ever experienced so we can boast in it, we can exult in it. We can look forward to it. We can hope in it. It's much like charting a course over rough seas knowing you have to have a bearing, a destination, a fixed point to move toward even though the seas in front of you are raging. Our fixed point, our bearing, our stability is the hope of heaven, the glory of God, being with him. That helps us navigate the raging seas of this world.

But biblical hope is not wishful thinking. It's not just, "I hope this will happen. I hope I win the lottery." Biblical hope is believing that what God says is coming is coming and looking forward to it and orienting your life around it. That longing for what is to come is to provide stability in our lives now. Let me illustrate this in a contemporary way that

many folks will enjoy and that's the Super Bowl. The Super Bowl is coming up in a few weeks. Did you ever think of what it would be like to play in the Super Bowl? Can you imagine how nerve-racking that would be, playing in the biggest championship in all of football? What if you were to play the Super Bowl but you knew that your team already won it? You'd be like, "We win." Think about the football players who are so nervous they can't sleep, they can't eat, they don't know what to do. If you knew you were going to win the game, you could enjoy playing the game even though people are trying to rip your head off because we win. Rough comparison here, "Exult in the hope of the glory of God" means God already won the Super Bowl for us and we get to go to a place much, much better than Disneyland. He has already won but yet the game needs to be played, the race needs to be run. Life needs to be lived for his glory because he has set that fixed point which is the destination with him in his presence and his glory for all eternity and we get to exult in that.

Why does God write this to the Romans? Why does God allow it to be recorded and preserved for us? It's to give us confidence and stability so that we can navigate the challenges of life, so that we can stand and not fall. It's to give us confidence to exult in something, to navigate the challenges of a sin-cursed world. This hope, this expectant longing, needs to produce in us confidence and stability because we know that what is to come is good because we've trusted the good nature of God to save us, to provide his Son. God's glory, God's presence is good and the sufferings of this world can't compare to his goodness. Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Not even worthy to be compared. We don't know what it is, but it can't be compared to the sufferings of this world.

That leads us to our next blessing and that is that when we have peace with God, when we're standing in grace and we have a hope in heaven, we are now stable and secure in the midst of suffering. Remember from Hebrews, we have a great high priest who understands our suffering, who invites us to draw near to the throne of grace to help in our time of need so that we can stand. It means that there is a stability that the Bible describes as exulting in tribulations. Look at this, Romans 5:3-5 says, "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope." Paul says, "Exult in tribulation." That's designed to grab our attention. "Exult in what? I get exulting in peace with God, I get exulting in the hope of heaven but exult and boast in tribulations? Paul, what are you talking about?" It gets your attention, it makes you hone in on what he's saying.

Have you ever heard the phrase "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger"? People say that. Suffering doesn't just make you stronger, it makes you more like Christ and oftentimes that recognizing your weakness and your dependence upon him and your needing him and you're longing for him more. Your hope for him to come all the more. And suffering does something very, very interesting: it reveals to us how we are not like Christ because I don't know about you, but I don't always suffer very well. I don't suffer like Jesus suffered. Can anybody else join me in that? Okay, hands, yup. We don't suffer



like Christ. We complain, we get frustrated, we whine. We lash out. We get bitter. But Christ suffered in a way where he was constantly entrusting himself to the Father and God's plan of redemption that involved his Son suffering, crucified and dying. How I respond to suffering oftentimes reveals a very different view of the Father. It reveals my character. It reveals what I find important. God's plan to glorify himself in and through me or my plan to glorify myself in and through me. What do I rejoice in and what is important to me? What does my character reveal about me when I suffer? Is my view of the Father like Jesus? I can rejoice in suffering in part because it's one of the most effective ways to reveal how my heart is not like Jesus' heart. And I can rejoice because this then allows me to grow and recognize my great need for grace, my great need to grow and change by God's strength. That's stability, when you can look at the trials and sufferings of this world and say, "Lord, how are you using this in me to glorify yourself to help me love you more?" That's stability.

Again, we get stability because we know that tribulation leads to hope. I didn't read the rest of this verse. "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." We know that tribulations lead to hope. Tribulation brings about perseverance, perseverance character, proven character, hope so the text is saying: start with tribulation, and in hope. How is that logical connection made? Tribulation is the difficulties of life. How does tribulation lead to hope? How do the challenges of parenting lead to hope? How does sleep deprivation lead to hope? How does the reality of your car breaking down when you're really busy, lead to hope? How does your body that is aching and hurting when you get up in the morning and when you go to sleep at night, how does that lead to hope? How does working with my coworkers who are difficult, lead to hope? Not my coworkers but everybody else's. I digress. How does tribulation, the difficulties of life, lead to hope? Well, if tribulations reveal our character and if seeing our character, how different it is from Christ's character, if we change, if we change, our character changes, we then become more like Jesus. What that means is you think less like you used to think and you think more like Jesus thinks. It means you value less how you used to value things and you value more what Jesus values and what Jesus values is he values the Father and the Father's glory. You think and act more like Christ means you think and act more in tune with loving God, with his glory and ultimately him being exulted everywhere so you can grow in hope and look forward to the day where God's glory, his presence is manifested everywhere in front of you and you hope for that. You know the tribulations help you think and act more like Jesus so that you value what he values, namely, the glory of God. That's what hope is: looking forward to what is to come and that helps us long for something better in the midst of suffering.

Ultimately if suffering produces a deeper love for Jesus, then suffering has produced something wonderful, something beautiful, something good, something praiseworthy. God is to be glorified that he can use something as terrible as the cross to bring about something as beautiful as redemption and he can also use the suffering in our lives to help us long for him and love him more. That's the love of God poured out within our hearts and we know that that hope does not disappoint. We know that it's not a false hope, it's not wishful thinking, it's the kind of hope that does not disappoint. It never fall short

because God has shown by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that he can do what he says he's going to do. So this is a hope that does not disappoint because God has justified us if we've trusted him and he's poured out the Holy Spirit in us to give us confidence in the day that we stand before him because we are trusting in Christ.

Now, what are some takeaways? We've talked about a lot of things. Well, here are a few takeaways. I would encourage you to meditate on the graciousness of God this week, throughout the year. You know, Pastor Viars spoke about index cards and homework last week and he spoke about homework in a funny and a joking fashion but his point was very serious. Christian growth does not happen in 80 minutes on a Sunday morning. It happens in the daily activities of your life. It happens when you're tempted. It happens when you're being rebellious. It happens when you have a need. In life it's really easy to forget about all the blessings we talked about. It's easy to forget that we have peace with God when we deserve wrath. It's easy to forget that we have a future that is better even when the here and now is difficult. It's easy to forget in the moments of hardship that there is confidence that God will use this hardship to help me grow in my hope and my longing for him and his glory. Oftentimes we need to quiet our minds, turn off the TV, put your phone on airplane mode, whatever it takes. And maybe you need to put Romans 5:1 on an index card and review it regularly. Maybe you need to take your bulletin and pray through these 3 blessings that come from standing in grace each day this week to sear these ideas into your heart.

Another takeaway is: be open to the ways the Lord wants to change you this year. Be open to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The rejoicing and confidence that we've been talking about really puts us in a place where we can change. We can receive correction from the Lord, from people he's placed into our lives with confidence rather than insecurity because he has made a way for us to be secure so we can grow and change. Sometimes God's word convicts you and you resist. You resist change. You resist changing. You think, "I'm not that bad." You think, "I just want to change the subject. Let's talk about something else," anything but deal with the conviction of God. I would encourage you, don't do that. Don't allow yourself to be removed from the areas that God wants you to focus on to change and grow because you're standing in grace. You have nothing to prove. You have no reputation to maintain. You have no reason to blame everyone else because you're standing in a position of grace and you can then focus on how you need to change and grow. If the Lord identifies a number of ways he really wants you to change and grow, if you're focusing on Christ and standing in grace, you will be open to his correction.

The last takeaway is: allow suffering to produce godly fruit rather than being angry with God. Every week we as service pastors try to highlight people who are suffering, people to be praying for and there are a couple of reasons for that: 1. It's an opportunity to love and care for others in the church family through prayer and provide opportunities for us to love and serve them. It also reminds us all that we could be mentioned next. In other words, talking about suffering reminds us that we ourselves need to prepare our hearts for the suffering that God may lay out ahead of us. Please hear me on this: everyone responds to suffering. Everyone response to suffering. You either view suffering as a

means of God stripping away earthly joys so that you can focus more directly on him or you view suffering as a terrible inconvenience to all that you want to accomplish. Everyone responds to suffering. Will you suffer well and produce godly fruit? If God allows suffering in your life, it's to produce the godly fruit of perseverance, of proven character and hope and even that, my friends, even that is an evidence of his grace. Let's pray and rejoice together in the peace that we have before God and all the blessings that follow.

*Lord, we come before you and we rejoice in your grace and, Lord, we rejoice in the justification that comes by faith alone in Christ alone. And Lord, we recognize that your word has taught us that we if we've trusted you, have been justified by your blood, we now are in a position of peace with you and, Lord, we rejoice in that. Lord, we pray that we would meditate on your grace in a way where our hope, our longing for what is to come, our looking forward to your presence and your glory, would increase and the way that we view this world and even trials and suffering would be governed by the peace we have with you and the hope that is to come by being in the presence of your glory for ever and ever. Lord, help us to walk with confidence and stability, even in the trials and the sufferings of this life because we are standing in grace. To the praise and glory of your Son, in his name we pray. Amen.*