

Title: **Death, Taxes, and the 3-Dimensional Grace of God (Part 1)**
Text: **Acts 22:22-23:11**
Date: **May 24, 2026**

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Big Idea

Suffering is inevitable. Life is going to be hard. But how do we get through? We need what Paul has here: 3-dimensional grace. Past grace, future grace, and present grace—all coming to us from Jesus!

Opening Observations

Observation #1: He's Not Doing Anything to Deserve It

It's one thing if Paul had turned on God—he was living in sin, he was chasing after his own thing, running contrary to God's will and way. Okay fine. Then we'd expect things might go bad for him. He'd get some discipline or something.

But when you're following God with all your heart? When you're serving him and others, laying your own ambitions down? When you've made it your whole life's mission now to tell others about him? And then this is what he gets?! Rejected? Falsely accused? Beat up? Death threats? Heavy chains and prison bars? That's troubling. That's hard to swallow. It would make the suffering even more difficult.

Observation #2: He's Not Going Out of His Way to Pursue It

There are some of us who may think that if we're truly following Jesus it means we'll never suffer, we shouldn't suffer. But there are others of us who may think that suffering is, in fact, how you know you're truly following Jesus. Now, certainly, there is truth to this (cf. Matt. 5:11-12; 10:22; 16:24). But people can take it too far. Paul is willing and submitted to God should suffering come, but he's not looking to suffer unnecessarily (cf. Acts 22:25).

Dimension #1: Past Grace

How do you get through the trial when it comes? Some of us right now, we're so rung up with pain, we're disoriented in our distress, we

don't even know what to do, where to turn. Well, this idea of past grace gently reminds us to, in a word: *remember*. Who God was for us in the past is who he still is for us in the present and who will be for us on into the future. In other words: our present and future confidence is built on his past faithfulness. Recalling past grace helps in our present struggle.

Paul never forgot who he was in himself and the terrible road he was on. But he also never forgot how Jesus confronted him on that road, swept him up off it in his grace, and set him on a new course entirely (cf. Acts 22:1-21).

Dimension #2: Future Grace

There's another dimension of God's grace here—and it's equally critical if we are going to get through the inevitable hardships we'll face. On the one hand, as we've seen, sometimes when suffering comes you get so caught up in the present hurt that you go blind to the past. But now, on the other hand, I think we'd all admit, another thing that can happen is you go blind to the future. You lose hope. Everything goes dark. You're not looking forward to tomorrow. You're dreading it. You've lost sight of how God says the story's going to end.

"Those in union with [Christ] are promised that all the haunted brokenness that infects everything—every relationship, every conversation, every family, every email, . . . every job, every vacation—everything—will one day be rewound and reversed. The more darkness and pain we experience in this life, the more resplendence and relief in the next. As a character says in C.S. Lewis' The Great Divorce, reflecting biblical teaching: 'That is what mortals misunderstand. They say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it,' not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory.'" – Dane Ortlund



Reflection Questions

- Which dimension of grace discussed today do you think you need to lean in a bit more towards this week? Why? What would it look like for you to do so?
- Read the quote from Ortlund above again. Do you actually believe this? How would it change your experience of a current hardship if you did? Get specific!

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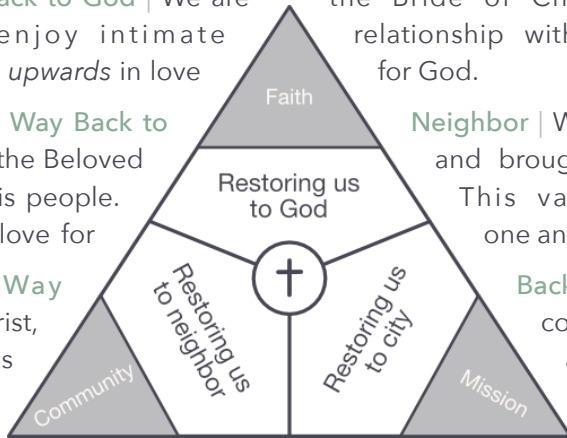
Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate relationship with him. This value presses our church *upwards* in love for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. This value presses our church *inwards* in love for Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal relationship with his people.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his ambassadors. This value presses our church *outwards* in love for the Back to City | We are commissioned by the unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

All Church Campout - Open Registration!

We are excited to announce that we will again be hosting our All Church Campout at Mount Madonna County Park over the weekend of June 26-28! We have a huge group campsite all to ourselves and lots of options in the park for having fun together. Whether you love to camp or you'd rather still sleep in your own bed, we have something for everyone. Because the park is only a 45 minute drive from south San Jose, people can feel free to come and go as it works with their schedule and preference.

- **Option #1: Day-Use:** For those not wanting to camp but still wanting to participate, the Day-Use option is best. You can come in for the day, enjoy activities, meals, etc., and then head home to your warm bed while the rest of us "rough" it :).
- **Option #2: Camp:** This option is for those who want the full camping experience. We have the site for Friday and Saturday nights. You can choose to camp for one or both of these depending upon your availability and desire.

Scan the QR code below for more info and to find a link to sign up!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

Sunday Prayer Walk - Today!

Mercy Hill Kids + Youth Graduation Celebration - 5/31

Support the Nicaragua Team!

Scan the QR code below for more info and clickable content!

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