

All of Grace

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read.

2 Timothy, chapter 2. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, and if we read again at verse 1. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, and verse 1, where Paul writes, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

But particularly the words there where Paul says, Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now, I'm sure I've told you many times before that the only thing that I remember from Sunday school, this is no word against Sarah or Margaret Joan, but the only thing I remember from Sunday school is grace, G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense.

Grace, G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense. I'm sure I was told many things. I'm taught many things as a child in Sunday school. But this is what had an impact upon me and an influence in my life.

[1 : 37] Grace, God's riches at Christ's expense. And as you know, the word grace, it means free gift. It's undeserved favor. Grace is freely receiving what you do not deserve, whereas mercy is not receiving what you do deserve.

So grace is not receiving what you do deserve. I've got that wrong. Grace is freely receiving what you do not deserve, whereas mercy is not receiving what you do deserve.

That's why the Bible describes God as gracious and also merciful. He's gracious because he gives to us what we do not deserve. He freely gives to us the provision of salvation and the promise of eternal life.

But he's also merciful. God is merciful because he does not give to us what we do deserve, because we deserve punishment in hell.

We deserve punishment for the penalty of our sin. So we're all hell-deserving sinners. And yet, God is gracious. God is merciful towards us.

[2 : 49] But the thing is, God is gracious and merciful towards us, as Paul highlights here, in and through Jesus Christ. God is gracious and merciful towards us only because of Jesus Christ.

God is gracious towards us, and he gifts to us the provision of salvation and the promise of eternal life only because Jesus paid for the gift.

He paid the price. He redeemed us by his precious blood. And God is merciful towards us. He does not punish us according to our sin only because Jesus took the penalty and Jesus took the punishment that we deserve.

Therefore, God is gracious and merciful towards us in and through Jesus Christ. It's grace. God's riches at Christ's expense.

God's riches at Christ's expense. So it's all of grace. Our salvation is all of grace. And you know, that's how Paul exhorts and encourages Timothy right here at the beginning of chapter 2.

[3 : 59] Because what Paul reminds and reassures Timothy here is that he's saved by grace and he's serving by grace. He's saved by grace and he's serving by grace.

And there are two headings this evening. Saved by grace and serving by grace. Because he says there in verse 1, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. And what you notice there is that chapter 2, it begins the same way that chapter 1 ended.

And that's because when Paul originally wrote this personal and pastoral and precious letter, he would have written it in, well, its original language, which was Greek. But back then, chapters 1 and 2, they weren't chapters.

It was just one long letter. There was no chapters. There were no verses. They were later added in the 16th century. And so 2 Timothy chapter 2, it picks up just where Paul left off in chapter 1.

[5 : 07] Because Paul here, he now personally applies everything he said in chapter 1. He personally applies it to Timothy with these opening words of chapter 2.

He says, You then. You then, my child. So he's applying everything he said in chapter 1 right here at the beginning of chapter 2.

You then, my child. Now, of course, Timothy wasn't Paul's biological son. But he was Paul's biblical son. Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy.

Paul was someone who nurtured and nourished Timothy in the truths of the gospel. In fact, Paul began, you'll see that in the opening verses, or verse 2 of chapter 1.

He began his farewell letter by addressing Timothy as his beloved son. And to his beloved son, as we read in chapter 1, Paul reassured Timothy that he's earnestly praying for him.

[6 : 08] He also reminded Timothy of that firm foundation that he had from his godly mother and grandmother. He reminded Timothy of the good grounding that he had in the gospel.

Therefore, as Paul said in chapter 1, fan into flame. Fan into flame your God-given gift as a pastor and a preacher of the gospel. Because you're not to be ashamed of the gospel.

Timothy, you're not to be ashamed of the ministry of the gospel, nor the message of the gospel.

Timothy, you're to guard the gospel. You're to glory in the gospel. Don't be a deserter.

Don't be a defector like Phygelus and Hermogenes were. No, Timothy. Be devoted. Timothy, be dedicated to the gospel like this man on a ciphersus.

Timothy, my beloved son, he says, ensure that the gospel baton is passed on to the next generation. Make sure you're passing on the gospel. Because this gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

[7 : 14] And you know, you actually read through it and you try to get a sense of what Paul is saying to this young man, Timothy. And you can actually sense the emotion in the letter. Paul is writing these words only weeks or even days before his death.

And he's writing all this to this young man, Timothy. And he's trying to pass on the gospel baton to him and encourage him to keep going.

But you know what I love? Is that Paul knew Timothy. Paul wasn't with Timothy. He was in prison. But Paul knew Timothy. And he knew him well.

And Paul knew that this precious letter, it was going to be a painful letter to read. For young Timothy. It was going to be a hard blow to lose his spiritual father in the faith.

But more than that, Paul knew Timothy's character. Paul knew that Timothy, as a young minister, he knew that he was a timid Timothy. He knew that he was someone who struggled to stand at the front.

[8 : 20] Someone who struggled to stand up to opposition. He knew that he was a timid Timothy. And Paul knew that Timothy would have read this opening chapter of his letter and responded and said, well, Paul, that sounds very good.

That all sounds very good that I'm meant to stand firm and not be ashamed and be devoted. But how? Paul, how on earth am I going to do that?

Timid Timothy was asking Paul, reading this letter, probably saying, how on earth am I going to guard the gospel and then pass on this gospel battle?

How am I going to do it? And you know, Paul, he knew that Timothy would react and respond in this way. Which is why he says in verse 2, you then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul knew that Timothy would faithfully fulfill his ministry, not by his own strength, but by being strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[9 : 35] Paul is telling Timothy, remember, it's all of grace. Remember that this work you're involved in, it's all of grace. It's God's riches at Christ's expense.

And you know, it's not only Timothy who needs to be reminded of this. We need to be reminded of it too. We need to be reminded, first and foremost, that we're saved by grace.

And I think we should never tire of being reminded of that. In fact, when Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, which is the church where Timothy was serving as a pastor, Paul reminded the Ephesians, he reminded the Ephesians in those well-known words in chapter 2 that we're saved not by good works, but we're saved by grace.

But God who is rich in mercy, said Paul, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, by grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And Paul, you know, repeatedly in all of his letters, he repeatedly reminds Christians, you're saved by grace. It's all of grace. It's the free gift of God.

[10:56] The wages of sin is death. That's what he said to the Romans. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God, which you have received. It's eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It's all of grace. It's this undeserved gift. So Timothy says, remember, you then, my child, remember that you've been saved by grace.

Remember that you've been saved by grace. And you know, for Paul to say that, for Paul to speak about grace, as we know, that was massive. Because you remember that before Paul was converted, before he had that Damascus Road experience, Paul was someone who lived as a self-confident, legalistic Pharisee and persecutor of the church.

So much so that Paul confessed, he said, if anyone ever thought that they had confidence and a claim upon God for their good works, I had more.

I had more. But then he confesses, as he did to the Philippians, when the grace of God by the Spirit of God began working in his heart and life, Paul was brought to see that all his good works, all his efforts, all his zealouslyness of persecuting the church and learning the Scriptures and all these things, it was all rubbish.

[12:23] as we were saying to the children in the kids' address a few weeks ago about putting it in the bin. It's all rubbish. It's all rubbish in comparison to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

And you know, this is something I think, I don't know, personally for me, anyway, something we can often forget in our day-to-day lives that our salvation, it's all of grace.

It's all of grace from beginning to end. There's nothing, absolutely nothing, we did to save ourselves. We didn't earn it.

We didn't work for it. We didn't deserve it. We weren't better than anyone else in here or out there.

And it's not because we went to church or were brought up going to Sunday school or that we were taught the Bible.

It wasn't because there was anything good, gracious, or great in us that we were saved. You know, the only thing that we ever added to our salvation was the sin that we had to be saved from.

[13:29] That's the only thing we've added to it. All of our best efforts are tainted and tarnished with sin. Therefore, there's nothing we could do to save ourselves.

There's nothing we could add to our salvation. There's no ladder we could climb in order to reach our high and holy God. And the thing is, we didn't reach up to God.

It's not that we reached up to Him. It's that He graciously reached down to us and plucked us as brands from the burning. It's not what we often sing in Psalm 40.

He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock He set me on that rock establishing my way.

He took me from the fearful pit. So it's all of grace. All of grace from beginning to end. And you know, even when we use all these theological terms, we read them in the Catechism.

[14:32] And if you read them in the Catechism, you'll notice they all begin with the free grace of God. Justification is an act of God's free grace. Adoption is an act of God's free grace.

Sanctification is a work of God's free grace. Every single one of these theological terms, they're all bound up and based upon the grace of God in and through Jesus Christ.

Our election, all of grace. Our effectual calling, all of grace. Regeneration, union with Christ. As we said, adoption, justification, sanctification, perseverance, glorification.

all of grace. It's all of grace. As Paul said to Timothy in the previous chapter, it was God who saved us. It was God who set us apart.

It's God who sanctified us. It's God who called us to that holy calling, not because of our works, but according to His purpose and grace.

[15 : 35] It's all of grace. God's riches at Christ's expense. And you know, he says, Timothy, remember, you then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus because you're saved by grace.

Therefore, Timothy, you're to be serving by grace. You're to be serving by grace. That's what we see secondly. So saved by grace and serving by grace.

He says, you then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, so he's talking about this message of grace, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

So he's talking about you've been saved by grace, now you're to serve with a message of grace. And you know, it's often been said that we're saved to serve. We're saved to serve.

We're not saved to serve ourselves. We're saved to serve the Lord. And so as Christians, we're not to be stationary or sluggish or static or slothful or stagnant.

[16 : 49] No, we're saved to serve. We're saved to serve. And our Savior, he is the prime example, perfect example. He became a suffering servant in order to serve us and to save us from our sin.

He came not to serve. No, he came not, he came to serve, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Therefore, we're to be active and attentive in our service to the Savior. That's what Paul is saying here. And the thing is, you know, we don't serve in order to be saved. We are saved in order to serve.

That's the way we need to understand it all the time. We don't serve in order to be saved. We are saved in order to serve. Because all our service, it must be grounded in the grace of God.

All our service must be grounded in the grace of God. And you know, our understanding of the grace of God in our salvation and in our service, it's often caused a bit of confusion.

[17 : 59] You know, prior to the Reformation in the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church, they taught what you could call a stairway theology. This stairway theology where God is upstairs in heaven and sinful man is downstairs, that's probably where they got the blasphemous term the man upstairs.

That's where they probably got it from. But this stairway theology, it taught that as sinners, we receive God's grace through the sacraments, through and through our good works.

And that the more we do, the more we please God and the higher we climb the stairway towards heaven. Roman Catholicism will tell you that you can't climb all the stairs to heaven.

But if you try your best and do what you can and expound all your energy and all your efforts to get closer to God and nearer to heaven, then God will see your works of service and somehow be obliged to meet you halfway and accept what you have done.

But of course, the reformers who taught the truths of Scripture, they said, no, no, no, no, no. The reformers said, our sin is so awful that all our works of service are tainted and tarnished by sin.

[19 : 17] So much so that we are completely incapable of climbing onto this first step of the stairway to heaven. They say, no, our salvation, our salvation from God and our salvation and our service to God, it's all by grace.

It's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. It's all of grace. In fact, the reformers, they regarded this Roman Catholic stairway theology.

They called it semi-Pelagianism, where God meets us halfway. God meets us halfway. But the truth is, that's a man-centered theology.

It's all based upon the fact that your salvation and your service is dependent upon you. Therefore, you must try harder.

You must be better. You must serve more. You must keep doing more and more and more in order to please God and get closer to heaven.

[20 : 28] But as you know, my friend, that's a religion based upon works, not a relationship based upon grace. And, you know, there was a Christian rap, I think I mentioned this before, years ago.

I heard it, and it's a Christian rap called, Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus. I think I played it once at Christianity Explored, Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus.

And in the lyrics, the rapper says, religion says do, Jesus says done. Religion says slave, Jesus says son. Religion puts you in bondage, while Jesus sets you free.

Religion makes you blind, but Jesus makes you see. And that's the thing, the blindness of religion. And if it is a religion we are working towards, it will always tell us, try harder, be better, serve more.

And, you know, even as a minister, here's a personal note, you know, ministers are often driven by guilt, which is a dangerous thing. We forget that it's all of grace.

[21 : 41] It's all of grace. So you have to try harder, be better, serve more. And this is why I find this so applicable to me as a preacher and a minister and to Timothy.

Be strengthened by the grace. It's all of grace, Timothy. It's not about what you're doing or you're serving or your activities.

It's all about the grace that you've received through your relationship with Jesus Christ. And through your relationship with Jesus Christ, you receive grace upon grace upon grace.

It's all of grace. And yet, you know, far too often as Reformed Christians, we sometimes slip into that stairway theology where we somehow think that our salvation is dependent upon our service. Our salvation is dependent that the more we do, the more we serve, the more approval we receive from people and the more favor we earn with God and the greater our reward in heaven.

[22 : 48] And sadly, when we think like that, we're often being led by legalism. Sometimes we're being puffed up by pride because our salvation and our service, it's no longer about God.

It becomes more about us. It's more man-centered than God-centered. And you know, when it's about us, when it's man-centered, we rely upon what the world would describe as our inner strength.

And you know, it becomes more about our aptitude and ability. It becomes more about our determination and our drive. It becomes more about our power and our proficiency.

It becomes more about our skills and our strength. It becomes about our giftedness. and not God's grace. It becomes about our giftedness.

That's when it's man-centered. It's all about our giftedness and not God's grace. And that's why Paul is reminding Timothy. And I want to highlight, I highlight this because I think it's so important.

[23 : 55] He says to Timothy, So everything we do within our congregation, it's not because of our giftedness.

We're not to rely upon our giftedness or our skills or our aptitudes or our determination. We're to rely upon the grace of God. We're to rely upon the grace of God.

It's not about how much we serve the Lord or how hard we work in the church or how much we do in the congregation. Timothy, he says, Timothy, the fact remains we would never do any of it.

We would never do any of it were it not for the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Our salvation from God and our service to God, it's all by grace alone.

Through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God, alone. It's all of grace. And Paul says, Timothy, we need grace in salvation and we need grace in our service.

[25 : 03] We need grace to be strengthened for service. You need grace to pass on the gospel. You need grace to proclaim the message of grace.

And where do you get that grace, Timothy? Where do you get it? The throne of grace. That's why we're exhorted and encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Because what do we find at the throne of grace? We are promised mercy. Not only mercy, but grace to help in our time of need. And you know, if anyone knew this to be true, it was Paul himself.

Paul knew this to be true. Throughout his ministry, Paul knew that there were times where he was completely out of his depth, struggling, despairing of life as he describes in another letter.

And yet, he knew that he was being upheld and strengthened by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. When he writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul explains how he received a thorn in the flesh.

[26 : 06] And that thorn in the flesh was to teach him. To teach him a lesson not to depend upon his giftedness, but upon God's grace. The thorn was to teach him to depend not upon his giftedness, but upon God's grace.

And even though Paul pleaded with the Lord to take this thorn in the flesh away from him, the Lord affirmed to Paul and assured Paul, saying, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength will be made perfect in your weakness.

And with that, Paul, he went on to confess that his need to depend upon God's grace, he said, Most gladly, I will glory in my infirmities, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore, I take pleasure in my weakness, my insults, my hardships, my persecutions, and my distresses. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

So Paul is describing here, he's saying that he learned not to depend upon his giftedness or his skills, but upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

[27 : 25] So when we come to doing something for the Lord, it's, Lord, give me the grace to do it to your glory. That's what he's saying here. Give me the grace to do it to your glory.

And you know, Paul learned this. He learned it because he says to the Philippians when he was in prison. He said, I've learned. I have learned that whatever situation I am in to be content.

I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. Then he says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And how could Paul do all things through Christ who strengthens him? Because he was depending not upon his giftedness, but upon God's grace.

Not upon his skills, but upon the strength that he was receiving through the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And you know, my friend, I'm sure that you've experienced that in your own life.

[28 : 34] Do you know those times where you've encountered and experienced sickness or suffering or sorrow? And yet, when you are emptied of your own resolve and emptied of your own resources, you know that the Lord is upholding you by his grace.

You have no strength left. And you know that you have been supported and strengthened by his grace and his grace alone. And he affirms to you, he assures you, as he did with Paul, he says, my grace is sufficient for you.

My strength is made perfect in your weakness. This is the wonder of God's grace. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Timothy, Timothy, don't be afraid to pass on this gospel baton because you've been saved by grace and you're to serve by grace.

You are being strengthened to serve by grace because it's all of grace. It's all of God's riches at Christ's expense.

[29 : 54] Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. us. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee this evening for reminding us that our salvation is all of grace and that our service to thee is all of grace.

And Lord, we pray that we would be strengthened by the grace of God in all that we do, that we would seek to be strengthened by God's grace to do everything to thy glory.

And Lord, that the glory would be thine and thine alone, that it would be not unto us as the psalmist says, not unto us, but to thou glory take and to thy name mean for thy truth and for thy mercy's sake.

O Lord, forgive us, we pray, that we seek to take the glory to ourselves and the honour and the praise. But Lord, we ask that everything would be done to thy glory and that it would be done in the grace of God and that we might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Bless us, we pray. Go before us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

We're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 65.

[31 : 25] Psalm 65, it's in the Scottish Psalter and we're going to sing from the beginning down to the verse marked four, the end of the double verse marked four.

It's on page 297 of the Blue Psalm book, Psalm 65 from the beginning. Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows paid shall be.

O thou that hear an art of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me do, but as for our transgressions, then purge away shalt thou.

Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makes approach to thee, that he within thy courts, O Lord, may still a dweller be. We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace and with the goodness of thy house in of thy holy place.

We'll sing these verses of Psalm 65 to God's praise. Praise, praise, praise, for thee in Zion, Lord, New Country, who shall come to thee.

[33 : 06] God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. The highest king of thy glory.