

All the Grace

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, Ephesians chapter 2, we're going to look at the whole chapter this evening, so it's one sweep across the chapter because that's the chapter we're looking at on Monday night in the Bible study, and Ephesians chapter 2, but if we read again at verse 8, the well-known words of verse 8, Ephesians 2 at verse 8, where it says, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. As you know, when it comes to the subject of grace, a lot of ink has been spilt on this subject because there's an endless amount of books that have been written on the topic of grace, and they all have titles which emphasize and explain the goodness of God's grace.

There's books called All of Grace, About Grace, Just Grace, Grace Notes, Transforming Grace, Grace Alone, The Message of Grace, The Story of Grace, The Gospel of Grace, The Depths of Grace, But there's one particular favorite that I like, is Philip Yancey's book, maybe you've read it, What's So Amazing About Grace?

What's So Amazing About Grace? Which is obviously drawn from John Newton's famous confession of faith, that it was, Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. But you know, when you consider how amazing God's grace really is, we'd have to confess that, well, not enough ink has been spilt on the subject of God's grace.

[2 : 2 0] But of course, the thing about grace is that it's better felt than told. It's better felt than told because we can't truly explain it to someone. Because as we saw in chapter 1, how amazing God's grace is, Paul describes and he defines to us all the blessings that all believers receive from the gracious hand of King Jesus.

And that's what grace is. Grace is, as we learned as children, God's riches at Christ's expense. Grace is receiving what you do not deserve. And in chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Paul gave us this long list of blessings which we have graciously received from the hand of King Jesus.

We've received election, predestination, adoption, justification, sanctification, redemption, forgiveness, pardon, perseverance, glorification, and we have that promised eternal inheritance.

And it's all given to us freely and fully, all of grace. It's all been graciously and gloriously given and gifted to us by the hand of King Jesus.

And as we saw towards the end of chapter 1, the second half of chapter 1, Paul prayed that all of these blessings which have been graciously given and gifted to us, all of them, that we would experience them, that we would enjoy them.

[3 : 46] And by enjoying them, we would have a deeper relationship with God by coming to know Jesus better. That's what Paul prayed towards the end of chapter 1. That by receiving all these gifts, all these graces, we would come to know Jesus better.

But now as we come into chapter 2, Paul is no longer describing and defining all these blessings and all these benefits of God's grace. Paul is now describing and defining the impact of God's grace and also the influence that God's grace has upon us, both personally and publicly.

So Paul is, in chapter 2, he's describing the impact of God's grace and the influence of God's grace upon us, both personally and also publicly.

And so as we consider chapter 2, we're going to look at it as a whole this evening, so we're not going to go into too much detail. But as we look at it as a whole, Paul describes and he defines, first of all, personal grace and then public grace.

Personal grace and public grace. So first of all, personal grace. And he makes it very personal, as you see there in verse 1.

[5 : 00] He makes it very, very personal. He says, And you.

Every time I come to this chapter, I'm always reminded of an illustration that I read a number of years ago.

And the illustration was where you have to imagine that you're gathered in an operating theatre. So go into your mind this evening. Just forget where we are.

Go into an operating theatre. And in the operating theatre, there is a patient stretched out on the operating table. But in order for us to diagnose this patient on the operating table, we have to call in the doctor.

And so we call in the doctor. And in walks Dr. Paul. And Dr. Paul, he walks into the operating theatre and he walks over to the operating table. And he looks at the patient lying on the table.

[6 : 25] He begins to examine the patient on the table. He even pokes and prods the patient just to examine him further. And then Dr. Paul gives his diagnosis of this patient.

He says, He's dead. The patient is dead. Dr. Paul, are you sure he's dead? Yes, the patient is dead. As he says there, He's dead in trespasses and sins.

But with such a devastating diagnosis, surely we need a second opinion. You can't just say he's dead and walk away. So we need a second opinion.

We don't want to pull the plug on this patient if he's still alive. And so a second opinion is called for. And another doctor is called for. So another doctor comes in. But this doctor that walks in is Joseph, Dr. Joseph Arminius of the Arminians.

He walks into the operating theatre. And when Dr. Arminius, when he makes his own examination of the patient on the operating table, Dr. Arminius concludes that this patient, he's not as bad as Paul made him out to be.

[7 : 35] He's not dead in trespasses and sins. He's semi-conscious because there's still a little bit of life in him yet. If you were to poke him in the right place or even pull at his emotions or speak to him eloquently enough with reason and with wisdom or maybe even shout at him passionately and persuasively, then he could wake up.

He could get off the operating table but only if he wanted to. This patient could respond to your voice and get up off his bed and walk out of here but only if he wanted to.

It's his decision to make and he has to decide. Well, now you have two contradicting conclusions of the same patient. So we need a third opinion. So the door opens again.

A third doctor walks in. You have Dr. John Calvin. He walks into the operating theatre and it's now surrounded by doctors. There's Dr. Paul and Dr. Arminius and Dr. John Calvin.

And Dr. John Calvin, he makes his examination of the patient. And Dr. John Calvin, he concludes and says, I agree with Dr. Paul. This man is dead.

[8 : 50] He's dead in his trespasses and sins. And Dr. Calvin says, Dr. Paul has written all this. He's written it in his notes that the reason the patient is dead is because he has been deceived.

That's what he writes here. He has been deceived by the devil. He has been deceived by the desires of his flesh. And he has been deceived by his own disobedience. And the outcome is he's dead.

He's dead in his trespasses and sins. There's nothing you or I can do for this man. It wouldn't matter if we poked or prodded him in the right place. It wouldn't matter if we spoke with eloquence or with emotion towards him.

It wouldn't even matter if we preached to this patient with passion and persuasion. There's no way he could get up off the operating table and walk out of here.

This man is absolutely dead. His only hope, says Dr. Calvin, his only hope is if God himself were to regenerate this man and revive this man and resurrect this man and bring him back to life.

[9 : 56] And as Dr. Calvin, as he reads the patient's notes, you know, it's a fascinating illustration when you think about it. As he reads the patient's notes, he asks the other doctors, he asks Dr. Paul and Dr. Arminius, do you know this patient's name?

Have you read the patient's name? And, well, they're looking at him and tell us his name then. His name is Adam I. And his notes say that he's dead in his trespasses and sins because he fell.

He fell from the perfect estate wherein he was created. He fell from that perfect estate of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Because Adam I, as it says in his notes, he was king of creation.

He was the climax and culmination of God's creative work. He enjoyed a perfect relationship with God before the fall. He had a perfect relationship even with his wife, Eve, before the fall.

Imagine that. Perfect relationship with his wife. Adam I had a perfect life. He had it all. But when he fell, he lost it all.

[11 : 05] And it's all written here because he broke God's law. He transgressed the boundary line of God's covenant. He completely missed the mark of God's holy standard.

And now, says Dr. Calvin, look at him. He's dead. He's dead in his trespasses and sins. And because he's dead, he can't hear us. No matter how much we speak or shout or poke or prod him, look at him.

He's dead. He can't see. He can't hear. He can't speak. He can't sing. He can't change his mind. He can't change his heart. He can't confess his sin. He's dead. Look at him.

He's completely dead. He is one who has been deceived by the devil, deceived by the desires of his flesh, and deceived by his own disobedience. He's dead. Adam I, look at him.

He's dead. And with that, Dr. Calvin, he makes a suggestion to the other two doctors that are there. He says to Dr. Paul and to Dr. Arminius, well, we should call in a specialist consultant who has studied this subject in depth so that he can explain to us the situation of this patient.

[12 : 15] So all the doctors, they're sitting there, they confer with one another, and they agree. They agree to let another doctor into the operating theatre. So the doors open again. In walks Dr. Martin Luther.

And as Dr. Luther, he now stands over the patient and it's, well, what a selection of doctors we have here. But he looks over the patient's notes and he sees what Dr. Paul has written and he says, I see, Dr. Paul, that you have written in the patient's notes not only the ruin of this patient but also his remedy and that his remedy can be summarised in two words, but God.

But God. Undoubtedly, says Dr. Luther, the gospel of Jesus Christ is summarised in those two words, but God. Because every spiritual blessing that we receive from the gracious hand of King Jesus, it's all bound up in those two words, but God.

In those two words, says Dr. Luther, we discover that God is rich in mercy. He's abounding in love, he's abundant in life, and he's full of grace.

He's rich in mercy because he doesn't give to us what we deserve. He's abounding in love because he has loved us from everlasting to everlasting. He's abundant in life because he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

[13 : 42] And he's full of grace because he gives to us so much of what we do not deserve. In those two words, gentlemen, says Dr. Luther, in those two words, but God, we discover who this God is.

He is rich in mercy, he's abounding in love, he's abundant in life, and he's full of grace. And as Dr. Luther stands over this dead patient, as he stands over Adam I, he explains to all the other doctors, he explains to them that this patient can only be brought from death to life by the grace of God and the grace of God alone.

He can only be regenerated and revived and resurrected from death to life by grace, by grace alone. And as Dr. Luther explains to the other doctors that are standing there, he says, I know this from personal experience.

I was where this man once was. Because for many years, I struggled with this subject. I struggled with assurance of salvation. I struggled with peace, the idea of peace with God.

Because for generations, I was stuck in the Roman Catholic Church where I was taught that we were saved by grace through works. Where we receive grace from God by what we do, not by simply what Jesus has done.

[15 : 05] We were told that we receive God's grace by the sacraments and charitable gifts and acts of penance and paying indulgences and praying to the saints.

But for me, it didn't matter how much I did or how much I gave or how much I repented or how much I prayed. I always felt I was never good enough or worthy enough or did enough to be acceptable in the sight of a holy God.

But this caused me to search the scriptures. Gentlemen, it made me study my thesis to receive my PhD. And what I discovered in Dr. Paul's letter to the Romans was that the righteous shall live by faith.

The righteous shall live by faith. Therefore, says Dr. Luther, it's impossible for us to improve our standing before a holy and a righteous God regardless of how much we partake of the sacraments or do charitable deeds or acts of penance or pay indulgences or pray to the saints because none of it, none of it, says Dr. Luther, will help us climb that imaginary and illusionary ladder that will eventually reach heaven.

No, we need God to intervene. We need God to step down and graciously step into our lives because salvation is all of grace.

[16 : 28] And we receive God's grace not by our works of righteousness but by simple faith in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

That's what I discovered in my thesis. The righteous shall live by faith. And you know, gentlemen, it was for that reason, says Dr. Luther, that I, that was the reason I nailed my 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany on Halloween, the 31st of October, 1517.

And although I didn't realise it at the time, that was the spark that set fire to this Reformation that would eventually spread across the whole of Europe. And as you'd be aware, Dr. Calvin, the Reformation produced those five Latin phrases which summarises Dr. Paul's teaching here that we can see written in his notes.

Those five Latin phrases, those five Reformation solas, we see it all here, there was sola scriptura, scripture alone. Because scripture is the only rule to direct us, not the opinions of the Pope or the priests or even the people.

It's scripture alone, sola scriptura. But there was also sola fide. We see that here in Paul's notes too. Sola fide, faith alone. We're saved by faith, not by works.

[17 : 53] Sola fide, faith alone. But it's also sola gratia, grace alone. Because our salvation is received as a gift, not by our baptism, not by religious duties, not by doing any works.

It's sola gratia, grace alone. There's also sola Christos, Christ alone. Because salvation is through Christ alone, not the church, not the sacraments, not the Pope.

It's all sola Christos, Christ alone. And who is it for? It's not ultimately for us, says Dr. Luther. No, it's all soli deo gloria, the glory of God alone.

Because our salvation, it's from Christ, it's through Christ, and it's to Christ. It's all to the glory of God alone. And as you can see here in your notes, Dr. Paul is writing here, it's not of works, lest any man should boast.

It's all soli deo gloria. It's all to the glory of God alone. And it's all to his glory. That's what he says there, right towards the end of his notes here.

[19 : 03] It's all to his glory. Because we are his workmanship. We are his vessels of glory. We are his trophies of grace. It's all to his glory.

It's all of grace from beginning to end. And it's all to the glory of God. And you know, as Dr. Paul and Dr. Arminius and Dr. Calvin and Dr. Luther, as they all leave the operating theatre together, continuing to discuss the patient on the operating table, they all know that God's grace not only impacts us personally, it also influences us publicly.

It influences us publicly, which is what we see secondly, public grace. So there's personal grace, Adam the first on the table, but then there's public grace.

Personal grace and public grace. So public grace, we read there in verse 11. Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[20 : 33] You know, the fact that you could say Dr. Paul writes therefore at the beginning of verse 11, it should immediately signal and signify to us that both sections are connected.

The first section and the second section are connected and they're both connected by this subject of grace. Where our personal grace should impact and influence our public grace.

Our personal grace should impact and influence our public grace. In other words, God's personal work of grace in our heart and life as a Christian.

It should have an impact and influence upon our public life of grace as a member in the church. And we can see that because Dr. Paul, we'll keep calling him Dr. Paul for just now, he explains and he emphasises in the first half of the chapter, he says how bad it was.

He tells us how bad it was, the operating table. He says that we were like Adam I, we were graceless and godless, we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

[21 : 40] And also in the second half of the chapter, Dr. Paul explains and he emphasises just how bad it was when we were without hope and without God in the world.

Dr. Paul says that as uncircumcised Gentiles, we weren't circumcised Jews descending from Abraham. In other words, we didn't bear the covenant sign and symbol that was given to the Israelites.

We were separated. Therefore, he says, we were separated from Christ. At that time, we were separated from Christ. We were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. We were strangers to the covenants of promise.

We were without hope and without God in the world. That's how bad it was. We were not only dead, but we were also divided. We were dead in our trespasses and sins and we were divided from God and his people.

We were separated from them. We were outcasts. We were orphans. We were strangers to grace and to God. That's how bad it was. But you know, I love what Dr. Paul says.

[22 : 51] He says next, verse 13, but now, and it's amazing, in this Bible, I don't know who did it, maybe it was me that did it ages ago, but now, in verse 13, is highlighted here.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. And, what you ought to notice is that when Paul describes and defines personal grace and public grace in these two sections, he says, but God and but now.

But God and but now. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were on the operating table. Verse 4, but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, made us alive together with Christ.

And we were not only dead, he says, we were divided from God and his people. Verse 13, but now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But God and but now. But God and but now. Your whole salvation can be summarised with that phrase. But God and but now.

[24 : 15] But now you are no longer separated from Christ. But now you are no longer alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. but now you are no longer strangers to the covenants of grace.

But now you are no longer without hope and without God in the world. And it's all because you have been brought near. You were once far off, prodigals in the far country, but you have now been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ.

You have been redeemed and restored and renewed and reconciled. You have been welcomed into a new relationship with God as your heavenly Father. And because you have this new relationship, this is what Paul goes on to say, because you have this new relationship, you are no longer, emphasise, no longer, you're no longer separated.

You're no longer strangers. No, no. You're now saints. No longer separated or strangers. You're now saints. You're fellow citizens of heaven.

You're members of the household of God. You belong to the household of faith. You are part of the church of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 37] It should blow your mind. And you're part of this church, a church which Paul goes on to explain, that has a firm foundation. It's a church with a firm foundation because it has been built upon the teaching of the apostles and the prophets with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

He is the capstone of the whole structure. And you're being built as part of this structure. You're part of this great structure, this firm foundation. You're part of this project.

You've been brought into this project. You're part of this work. You're part of this great plan of salvation. You're not exempt from it. You're not excluded from it. You're brought into it.

You're brought in to enjoy it and experience it. You're part of the temple of the living God. You're the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. That's what he says.

He says there, look, verse 20, It's all built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom, so it's in Christ, the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

[26 : 47] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. You're part of this. You're no longer an exile.

You're no longer excluded. You are included. You've been brought in. You're the temple of the living God. You're the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit.

And now here's the application. And here's the conclusion. Because the grace of God not only influences and impacts our personal lives as Christians, the grace of God should also impact and influence our public lives as members in the church of Jesus Christ.

So what Paul is saying here is if you've had a but God experience, then you must have a but now example. If you've had a but God experience where you've experienced and you enjoy the grace of God in your life personally, then you must have a but now example.

In other words, if you have been shown grace, which we all have, then you must show grace to others in the way you live your life.

[28 : 12] If you have been shown love, that's what Paul describes here, like what God has done in your life. If you have been shown love, which we all have, then you must show love towards others.

If you have been shown mercy, which we all have, then you must show mercy towards others. If you have been shown forgiveness, which we all have, then you must show forgiveness towards others.

and that's hard. Jesus talks about it in the Lord's Prayer, in the Sermon on the Mount, about forgiveness. If you have been welcomed into the church of Jesus Christ, which we all have, welcomed in with open arms, then you must welcome others too.

Our personal grace must be evidenced by public grace. That's what Paul is saying here. Our personal grace, the grace of God that has worked in our heart and in our life, that has come to us personally, that must be worked out.

It's been worked in, therefore it must be worked out. It must be evidenced by public grace. What we have been shown by God is what we must show to others because, as he says there, you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

[29 : 42] And you look at Ephesians 2 and you ask, well, what's so amazing about grace? Grace really is amazing. It's no wonder so much ink has been spilt on the subject of grace because whether personal grace or public grace, it truly is amazing grace.

So, friends, let's make sure that our personal grace is evidenced by our public grace as those who have been brought in into the church of Jesus Christ.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we bow in thy presence, realizing, Lord, that we are undeserving of the least of thy mercies.

But we bless and praise thee tonight that we are saved and we are saved by grace. We are saved by grace through faith and that even faith itself is a gift, the faith to believe upon Jesus, the faith to trust him and to lean upon him.

And so, Lord, our prayer is, increase our faith and that we might know more and more of the grace of God, not only in our own lives, but working out in the lives of, as we meet others.

[31 : 04] That we, Lord, have been shown grace. Help us to be gracious. We have been shown mercy, so help us to be merciful. We have been shown forgiveness, so help us to forgive.

We have been shown love, so help us to love one another. Oh, Lord, and we have been welcomed into the kingdom. We have been brought into the church of Jesus Christ, so help us, Lord, to be welcoming, to welcome others, to welcome them into the household of faith.

And, Lord, we pray that we would all be built up as a spiritual house, holy and acceptable unto thee, that it would all be solidel gloria to the glory of God alone.

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

Hear us, then, we pray. Go before us, we ask, and keep us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening.

[32 : 14] We'll sing the words of Psalm 84, the concluding words of Psalm 84. So, in the Scottish Psalter, page 339, Psalm 84, from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 84, from verse 8, Lord God of hosts, my prayer here, would Jacob's God give ear? See God our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear. For in thy courts one day excels a thousand ratheren.

My God's house will I keep a door than dwell in tents of sin. For God the Lord's a sun and shield. He'll grace and glory give and will withhold no good from them that uprightly do live.

O thou that art the Lord of hosts, that man is truly blessed, who by assured confidence on thee alone doth rest. So these verses in conclusion of Psalm 84 to God's praise.

God of hosts, my prayer here, O Jacob's God give ear, seek God's shield, look on the face of thine anointed dear.

[33 : 53] For in thy courts one day excels a thousand ratheren.

my God's will, my God's will, my keep, adore, and dwell in tents of sin.

For God the Lord's Lord's the sun and shield, He'll grace and glory give, and will with hope
O God's will, O God's will, O God's will, O God's will, The Lord of hosts that man is truly
blessed, who by assured confidence on the alone rest.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.