

TV: A Look at God's Grace

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:1-2
Preached on: Sunday, May 5, 2019

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Kingsport Sovereign Grace Church located at 905 Yadkin Street in Kingsport, Tennessee would like to invite you to listen to a message of Sovereign Grace by their Pastor, Gabe Stalnaker. And now, Pastor Gabe Stalnaker.

In Ephesians 1, the first two verses say, Ephesians 1, this is verses 1 and 2, it says,

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like for us to look just for a moment at the subject of God's grace. What a wonderful, blessed, beautiful subject, God's grace.

Paul said, "Grace be to you. God's grace be to you." What is grace? When he says "Grace be to you," what is grace? What does he mean by that? Grace is probably one of the most commonly used words in religion. Everybody uses the word "grace." We talk about it. We say that we believe it. You ask anybody, "Do you believe in God's grace?" "Oh yes." But what is it? What truly is grace? Well, verse 2 tells us that it's something that comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 2 says, "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." It's something that comes from God. It belongs to him. It's his grace. That's an important place to start. When we talk about God's grace, it's important to understand that it's his grace. It belongs to him.

Verse 6 here in Ephesians 1 tells us that it's something that brings praise and glory to God. Verse 6 says, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." It brings much praise and much glory to him. The end of verse 7 tells us that it's something of great value. It says, "according to the riches of his grace." Great value, and we can clearly see that that is the case because chapter 2, if you look at Ephesians 2 with me, the end of verse 5 tells us that it is the means of our salvation. The end of chapter 2, verse 5 says, "by grace you are saved." By grace, sinners are saved. It's the means of salvation. Verse 8 in chapter 2 says, "For by grace are you saved." Very clear. Very plain. By grace are you saved.

And chapter 3 continues in telling us what grace is. If you look at chapter 3, verse 7, it says, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of grace, the gift of the grace

of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." Verse 8 says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Grace is a gift. It's a gift. It literally means, the word translates "kindness or favor freely bestowed." Kindness or favor freely bestowed. It's a gift. That's what grace is, it's a gift, and where do we find this gift? How does this gift come to us, this gift of God? Where do we find it? It is in and it is through the Lord Jesus Christ. The gift of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of God is through the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's grace. Grace comes from him, only him.

If you'll look with me at John 1, it says in John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." God's grace is in him. It came to us by him and through him, and what that means is, his accomplishment, everything that he accomplished for his people was God's grace to us, God's gift to us. His work, his payment, was our gift. Everything he accomplished, our gift.

In order to enter into God's grace, we have to understand the true definition of the word "grace." It is 100% a gift. I must emphasize this. If we're gonna get a hold of God's grace at all, we must understand that it is 100% a gift freely bestowed, freely given. On our part as the recipient of the gift, as the recipient of grace, it is the exact opposite of works. Alright, to understand grace, we need to understand that it is the exact opposite of works.

If you'd like to look with me at Romans 11, we can read in Romans 11:6 it says, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." God's grace is in Christ and it's freely given totally on his part, and it's not earned by the sinner at all. The sinner does not work for it. We don't work for God's grace and that's kind of shocking to most people because many believe that's what we do, many believe you have to earn God's grace, but what Romans 11 just said is salvation is either by grace or by works. You can't mix the two.

You cannot mix the two and that's true with even the way we live here on this earth. You just can't mix works and grace. You cannot work for something and fulfill what was required and then call it, if you get paid for it, a freely bestowed gift. You can't do that. You just can't do that. You know, you can't say, "Well, I'm not gonna pay taxes on the amount of money that my employer gave me because that was a free gift." You can't say that. It was not a free gift. That was earned income. Isn't that how we list it on our taxes? Earned income. It wasn't a free gift. That was earned.

You cannot work for a free gift. That does not work on our taxes and that doesn't work with God. You cannot call it a free gift if you earn it. At the same point and time, you cannot receive something absolutely freely bestowed to you that involved no effort on your part, no expense on your part, was completely purchased and wrought and given to you by someone else, I mean, completely given, you cannot receive that free gift and then go around telling everybody, "I earned this." You can't do that. It's not so.

He said in verse 6 it's either works or it's grace, it's one of the two, and when it comes to our salvation, we just read it, it's grace. It's grace. "By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." That was Ephesians 2:8. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Grace is the gift, faith is the gift, "by grace are you saved through faith." That's a gift. That's not of yourselves. That's a gift. It is all a gift. It's all a gift.

Now if you'll look with me at Acts 18:27, it says, "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." Men and women will naturally try to make a work out of anything that they can. Anything they do, spiritually speaking, they'll try to make a work out of it, and they will say, "Well now, when it comes to salvation and these things, you at least have to believe. Well now, you have to believe now. You have to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," as though to insinuate, "Now that's on you. That's up to you."

According to the commandment of God, all of his people will believe. They will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but that ability to believe is God's gift to them. It's God who works in his people both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is God's gift. It's not a work on their part, that ability to believe. He quickens them. He does something in them. He performs the work in them and that is totally a gift to them. He enables them to do it and he gets the praise for it and he gets the glory for it, even our faith to believe on him. Hebrews 12 says he is "the author and finisher of our faith." So he gets the glory for it.

We only believe through grace. Through grace. This right here is the message of the Gospel: God's freely bestowed and complete gift to sinners. That's the announcement. If somebody is truly gonna preach the Gospel, that's what he's gonna preach, God's freely bestowed gift to sinners. In Acts 20:24 it says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The Gospel of the grace of God. If we are going to preach the Gospel, if we are going to hear the Gospel, and if we are going to truly believe the Gospel, then we have to preach here and believe God's freely bestowed gift to sinners.

That's the Gospel. We have to preach grace. If we are going to preach the Gospel, we have to preach grace. We must preach grace. We cannot preach what sinners need to be doing in order to earn what Christ has already earned for them. We cannot preach what sinners need to be doing in order to accomplish what Christ has already accomplished for them. That's not grace, that's works. That's works and God won't accept it.

This is critical information to know, God will not accept it. Let me show you that in Romans 3. Romans 3:10 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That's pretty clear. None. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of

cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." No fear of God. That's man by nature. That is mankind in his natural flesh. There's no fear of God before their eyes.

Verse 19 says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law was not given, the law of God, the commandments of God, they were not given to show us how to earn salvation. They were not given for that reason. Moses did not write these things to show us how we can earn salvation through our works. God gave Moses these commandments and they are recorded for us in here to prove to us our sin and prove to us that we cannot keep his commandments.

Are they his commandments? Yes, they are. He said, "If you do this, you'll live," but through these commandments we realize, "I can't do it. I cannot work the works that God would require for me to be saved." Only Christ can do that. Only Christ. We cannot keep this law. It's impossible. We cannot do it. We have all gotten angry at some point or another. God says that's murder and a murderer is not going into heaven. We have all lusted. God says that's adultery. All of these things that just freely come out of us, we have sinned against God.

Galatians 3 says whoever is trying to earn heaven through the works of the law is under the curse because he's never gonna do it. All of the law is gonna have to be kept. If we're gonna keep one commandment in the law, we have to keep all the commandments in the law. People say, "Well now, at least I do this." Well, what about the rest? It all would have to be kept. That's impossible for flesh to do. That's just impossible.

So we cannot earn salvation through the works of the law. Verse 20 here in Romans 3, it says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested," man-ifested, a man came, "being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." Everything in the law and the prophets points to him: his work, his accomplishment, his gift. Verse 23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace." All have sinned, all have sinned and in that sin, man has condemned himself, but is there any hope of being justified before God again? Yes, there is: freely by the grace of Christ, freely by the blood that Christ spilled to redeem his people.

Verse 24 says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Verse 25 says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," that means it's by grace and not by works, "to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," that means he did it, everything that needed to be done, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." It's his blood, it's his righteousness alone that redeems and makes the sinner perfect before God. It's his grace.

If I'm looking to my deeds, many people do, many people are looking within, looking to themselves to see, "Am I good enough for God to accept me?"; if I'm looking to my deeds even as a partial payment, he paid most of it and I have to pick up the slack, if I'm looking to that, then I'm not looking to his blood in righteousness alone, I'm mixing works with grace. And here's the thing we need to understand about that, when it all boils down to brass tacks, it's an insult to God. It's an insult to Christ. It insinuates that the life that Christ lived and the death that Christ died was not good enough.

That's what it insinuates. The body he broke and the blood that he shed, it was just not enough. It was an imperfect gift. That's what it insinuates. It was an incomplete gift, an incomplete work, and God will not have that. He will not have that. He will not have us insulting and dishonoring the work and gift of his Son. He will not do it. He said it's grace alone, that means, "It's my Son alone. It's his work alone. It's the gift of his righteousness alone and the gift of his spotless blood alone."

So verse 27 right here in Romans 3, it says, "Where is boasting then," on our part? "It is excluded. By what law? of works? No: by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." That's grace. That's grace. That is the kindness and the favor of God freely bestowed. That's what it is. That's grace.

Now turn with me over to Romans 9. It says in Romans 9:15, this is quoting Exodus 33 where God said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." There in Exodus 33 he said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." That's what he means by compassion, "I'll be gracious. I'll show grace to whom I'll show grace."

Verse 16 says, "So then it is not of him that willeth." Men stand up and they ask people, "Won't you accept Jesus to be your personal Savior? Don't you want that? Don't you will for that to happen?" That's not how it works. He said, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." People stand up and say, "Now you gotta get on fire for Jesus, you gotta go out and work the works." That's not how it works. He said, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will give grace to whom I will give grace."

God's grace is sovereign. It's sovereign. It is a freely bestowed gift and he gives it to whoever he's pleased to give it to. It is absolutely sovereign. It is of God.

Now, there are still quite a few verses that we could look at that would give us some insight to the truth of his grace, very briefly I'll mention some of them. 2 Corinthians 4:15 says it's abundant. It is abundant. If you need God's grace, there's plenty of it. Abundant grace. It does not matter how great our sins are, it's abundant. Romans 5 says where sin abounded, sin abounded, grace did much more abound, grace to cover all my sin. It's abundant.

2 Corinthians 12:9 says it's sufficient. He said, "My grace is sufficient." Can we really put all of our trust in his grace? I mean, can we put our soul in his grace, cast it all on his gift of grace? Absolutely we can. His grace paid it all. It's sufficient. It is all that God requires.

And there's an endless number of things that we could say about his grace, but go with me to one more place. This notification of God's word, it comes to sinners, this truth comes to sinners, and it gives an understanding that grace belongs to God. It's his. It is his freely bestowed gift and it's an insult to him to try to add anything to it on our part, and he sovereignly gives it to whoever he will, and once a sinner sees that and realizes that salvation and his grace is in his hands and not mine, fear strikes the sinner. That sinner starts to think, "What if he doesn't give it to me? What if God does not give his grace to me? He gives it to whom he will and I don't deserve it. I'm a sinner. What if he does not give it to me? I need it and I see that it's in his hands." Seeing that, that being revealed to us, is God's call of saving grace. That ought to totally comfort our fears. Seeing the fear of the Lord, seeing that I need it and it's in his hands and my only hope is that he'll give it to me, that is God's call of sovereign grace. Eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart that believes, that's God's gracious call to sinners.

The Apostle Paul said, "I was thriving in religion but when it pleased God, he revealed his Son in me and he struck fear in me." We know the story of him on the road to Damascus. God said, "I am," and Saul of Tarsus said, "You are. God be merciful to me." That was God's call of grace and it's that way for all of his people, and this is my sincere prayer for everyone who's listening to this, my sincere prayer is what Paul told the Ephesians, "Grace be to you. Grace be to you." I pray that God would show grace, his sovereign kind favor, the gift of the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, I pray that he will show that grace to me and to you. God shed his grace on me, that's my prayer.

Til next week, the Lord bless his word.

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