

RELEASE DATE: 17th May 2024

God's precious promises Part Two - "Grace"

Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 1-10. Paul, in this letter to the church in Ephesus is seeking to remind the people of what they had been saved from. Lives that were self-centred, immersed in worldly habits and passions under the direction of Satan who had caused them to fall into sin and bring upon them the wrath of almighty God. BUT God, in His unending love and grace gave them, (and us in Broadstone), an option. We can know the true quality life – eternal life – God intended us to have. This life, provided by God's grace, begins here on earth, enabling us to do the works God wants us to do.



Rodney Burge

The grace of God and the love of God are almost synonymous. Grace is the love of God in action, coupled with His power, forgiving our sins, transforming our lives, nurturing us in the new life, guiding us in His service, preserving us for eternity. Grace is the term for all those spiritual blessings God gives to His children. We receive grace from God but never possess it as a right, He gives grace, He never pays us with grace. We see grace most clearly in Christ's saving work for us.

Salvation is the story of grace heaped upon grace in *John chapter 1 versus 16 and 17* ¹⁶ *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* It begins with God's grace and continues with a constant unfolding of that grace, His grace is supremely expressed to us through kindness in Christ Jesus. Grace is appropriated through faith and is intended to result in good works. We are not capable of good works until He makes us His new work of art the new creation in Christ.

In *Romans chapter 5 versus 20 and 21* we read:- ²⁰ *Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,* ²¹ *so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The sin of Adam was devastating in its effect on all people, involving them in sin also. Adam's sin brought God's wrath and judgement into the world. The grace of God loosed through Jesus Christ was even greater in its impact upon mankind. Undeserved salvation became available to all people, Jesus showed that God's grace is greater than all human sin.

Grace is not limited to a select few. God, in providing salvation through Jesus, offers grace to all sinners in abundance. The supply of grace is far greater than all human capacity to sin. In God's plan grace will ultimately rule the world.

In 2 Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 7-10 we read a section of Paul's testimony. *"⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Satan, not God, is the immediate cause of physical and emotional suffering. Satan gave Paul the thorn to torment him and divert him from faith and ministry. God allowed Satan to torment Paul and then used Satan's instrument of torture to increase Paul's faith. God's grace is shown in many ways in our lives. In this instance God's grace was the power to endure a heavy burden or difficult problem. This particular hardship was a blessing in disguise, in one sense, for it produced strength of character. It also made Paul learn to rely on God to help in carrying this burden or thorn in the flesh.

God's powerful grace is made more real to us when we are faced with our limitations and weaknesses. This is one of the rare cases in the Bible where God explains an answer of "no" to a prayer. God's glory is not shown in human strength. Paul had such impressive struggles that God's glory was best demonstrated by working through the unexpected, human weakness. God's "no's" work to use us better to accomplish His perfect purposes. The ascended Christ encourages His people when they are troubled.

Let us now turn back to Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth that was written about A.D. 55 from Ephesus. At that time there was a good deal of concern to Paul about some of the practices he had reports of. Among them was the problem of the undermining of the gospel that Paul had faithfully preached to them. **In 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 and verse 9** we read:

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The office of apostle was unique. Christ directly commissioned the apostles to bear witness to Him. They could not transfer this office to another and could not be replaced by another generation of apostles. Paul considered himself to be the last to receive this commission from the risen Lord. The literary fruit of their work is witness to Jesus contained in the New Testament.

God's grace comes to us not only in the free gift of salvation, but also in the unfolding development of the Christian life and in our service to the church. We must put forth our very best efforts to grow and serve God. At the same time, we know we have unseen spiritual resources enabling us to serve.

The grace of God provides these resources. We have not earned them, nor should we be jealous or proud of them. We should be humbly grateful for the grace God gives us to do His work.

In conclusion and by way of a summary let us look at **Titus Chapter two verse 11-14**

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

There are many more references to God's grace than we have been able to cover this morning. This could perhaps be a project for you to undertake, to really study the full extent of God's grace in Scripture and in your own lives in the light of God's word.

In this instance Paul, writing to his dear friend Titus, is seeking to encourage him in the task given to him to build a good solid foundation for the faith of the church in Crete. God's grace provides salvation for those who will accept it. His grace became visible to us in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ. His grace changes our lives, teaching us to say "NO" to temptation and to live like God wants us to, while we wait for Christ to come again.

That return encourages us believers to maintain a high level of ethical behaviour. We do not know **when** Christ will come but, we can rest assured He **will** come, because he promised to return and God never breaks His word. His coming will complete God's purposes and plans.

God's mercy and grace go hand in glove. His mercy is extended because of his nature and not because of our righteousness.

Praise be to OUR God and Saviour.

Transcript of the presentation given by **Deacon Rodney Burge** and discussed at the church home group on **Tuesday 14th May 2024**. All scripture references are from the ESV translation.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.