

Living in Grace

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Talking about grace, but really more, not so much God's grace to us, but God's grace in us. God's grace in us. There's a story told of a plane crash in 1987, August the 16th.

Northwest Airlines Flight 225 crashed just after take-off at Detroit, Michigan. One hundred and fifty-five died and one lived. The one who lived was a little four-year-old girl named Cecilia.

The wreckage was so bad that the authorities thought at first that Cecilia had not been on the plane. Checking the flight roster, however, and with Cecilia's own testimony, the following was discovered.

[1 : 15] As the crash was developing, Paula Chicken had unbuckled her own seatbelt, got down on her knees in front of her daughter, wrapped her arms around her and body around Cecilia and would not let her go.

Nothing could separate that child from the parents' love. Neither disaster, nor crash, nor flames, nor pain. And such is our Saviour's love for us too.

Think of the grace that, you know, a picture of grace, isn't it? That Christ wraps his arms around us and took our punishment for us. In Romans 8, 38 it says, For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

His grace, his love, nothing can separate us from. If we've known it, if we've received it, grace is that freely given, unmerited favour.

The love of God to us, the Spirit of God working in us. The virtue or excellence of divine origin, the condition of being in God's favour.

[2 : 37] Grace, there's so many definitions you could give, but really it's Christ, isn't it? Full of grace and truth. And God is the imparts of grace in our lives, the riches of his grace.

And who does he give it to? He gives grace to the humble. Grace to the humble. Grace. Someone defined it as the desire and the power that God gives us to do his will.

It's grace, isn't it? And consider the activity of grace, the intervention of grace. Grace is what makes us his. Grace finds us and makes us his own.

It makes us his vessel. Someone wrote this, what is a vessel? You can think of a vessel, whatever it be. A utensil for holding something. You know, we have many containers and we can have many coffee mugs or containers, coffee cups.

Whether we want to contain coffee or tea or Milo. The mug doesn't help decide or advise how it is used. The mug doesn't call for special attention.

[3 : 43] The mug hangs on a hook until it is called for. Until it is called for duty. And likewise, for you and for me. We're his vessels. We're his containers. We're the vessels that God chooses and uses.

And he gives grace to us to make us his. To give us our identity in Christ. And he's preparing human vessels still for his glory.

For God to fill. Not only does grace save us, we are to grow in grace. I'd like to turn to 2 Peter 3, verse 18.

So we see the grace of God for us. What about the grace of God in us and for us? In our lives. Active. Live down. In your shoes, walking around.

God's grace. 2 Peter 3, verse 18. It says there, We are to grow in grace.

[4 : 54] Grace isn't something that we should be static in. Or stagnant in. God's grace is exceeding abundant. It's abounding grace. It's abundant.

Amazing. God's grace for us. And consider that grace to us. It's grace granted to sinners. It's grace granted not on any virtue or deserving of our own.

It's undeserved by us. Grace reaches us. And grace teaches us. We read in Titus where it says that God's grace teaches us how to live soberly, righteously, godly in this present world.

And God's pathway, God's way of living for us, is grace. It's grace that is the pathway that we are to grow in and go in and go onwards in.

God's grace is for salvation and for godly living. Not only is his grace saving us and has saved us, but his grace is sanctifying us.

[5 : 57] It's holding us, keeping us. It's transforming us in godly living. I trust as that walk of faith continues, as we grow spiritually by his mercy, as we mature in Christ and become more according to how he wants us to be, to grow in grace, to grow in grace.

Friends, we all can ask ourselves, am I growing? Am I a growing Christian? Sadly, we see some, I've seen numbers myself, where there's a profession and there's an intention, it would seem, and yet it's short-lived.

And it seems shallow, empty, hollow, vain, whether they were truly even saved, as much as there was some impression of that. There wasn't the fruit, there wasn't the lasting fruit, the evident fruit, to show for it.

And God wants every one of us to grow in grace, to not just to be saved, but to go on in faith, to go on, to go forward in that grace, to live it in our lives.

And whilst there is that aspect of salvation that we're undeserving of, likewise too, of that growing, we're undeserving of it too, aren't we? We're unworthy.

[7 : 13] That he would walk with us, that we would have to, that we walk with him. We're inadequate and unworthy through our lives and there's always the natural human element to combat all the time for any one of us.

There's that human flesh to combat, to overcome, to crucify. And grace is something that we need day by day, moment by moment, to grow in.

God is gracious to us, isn't he? He's patient with us. He's so long-suffering. And thank God that we're accepted in the beloved.

We're not accepted by some performance-based measurement of man's doing. It's not an acceptance that's based upon performance. Because if it was, we'd all really fail far short.

Well, we all fall short of the glory of God, as it says. And nothing of salvation is works-based. And likewise, for our walk of faith, it's not really works-based.

[8 : 19] Our effort does not save us or keep us saved. It's grace-based. It's grace-based. And I guess if we've got that dimension of grace in our minds, then it teaches us, doesn't it?

It reaches us and it teaches us. And yet for some, it seems like that growth is stunted, it's impeded, it's hindered, retarded. The grace is not evident in their lives.

There's backsliding that's evident instead. And it's as some described in Galatians 5-7. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Some are hindered in the gospel race. Some are hindered. They don't allow God's grace to keep changing them and teaching them. It's as if they block their ears to the grace that teaches and they're not growing in grace.

So, brothers and sisters, be encouraged in your life as I need to be to grow in grace. Grow in grace. Secondly, 2 Timothy 2-1 tells us to be strong in grace.

[9 : 27] 2 Timothy 2-1 Not to be weak in grace, but to be strong in grace. As Paul writes there, 2 Timothy 2-1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

You know, sadly, it's true that Christians can be amongst the most ungracious and unkind, unforgiving, unloving.

I know I've experienced it at times, we all can, where those that seem quite pious can be most ungracious and that is a sad fact and I know that's true of me too.

That's been true of me in times past. I've said some very ungracious things to some godly men and women. I can look back in my life at some of the things and how I've treated some of my pastors in the past.

Some of the things that I've done and I say that with shame, to my shame and I honestly say that, that I regret some of the things I've said in haste, in lack of grace, as much as on numbers of occasions I still feel I was right in what I said, in bringing some kind of correction or rebuke, but we

all need to guard our hearts, don't we?

[10:50] Guard ourselves in the manner in which we say something, in how it comes over, as much as we might have it all right, all laid down and we feel righteous in saying it.

But it's the manner in which we say things can be ungracious and Christians can be sadly lacking in that department of grace. God wants us to be strong in grace, strong in grace.

There's a strength in grace. There's a strength in being gracious and God wants us to be enriched in His grace, to be strengthened in His grace, to be advancing in His grace.

And what characterises us, is it strength or is it weakness? And what does the world count as strength? What does Christ count as strength? As weakness.

It's the humility that is in Christ that should clothe us, isn't it? We should be clothed with His humility. We should have a zeal, not a deadness.

[11:49] And sadly, it's lacking too. That zeal, that fervour, that urgency, that intensity, that love for souls, that love for the truth, that love for God's will to be evident and live down.

God's grace working in us, it's lacking, brothers and sisters, because the church of God, the saints of God, are sadly lacking in that strength that grace can give and brings to lives.

And friends, we need to revive it. A Greek scholar, Zodiati, said, grace is like God's power generator, and we are like the conduits which carry His power to its intended purposes by the Holy Spirit.

We're carrying His power. Grace is God's power generator. Be strong in grace. By grace, we are strengthened. We are strengthened in our character and our Christ-likeness.

It says, exercise yourself in godliness. There's a strengthening. There's an increasing of strength. There's an exercising and a building of strength as we exercise ourselves in godliness.

[12:58] And maybe, honestly now, as a man, as a woman, when you feel weak, when you feel a weakness, it could be that it's God's power that you're lacking.

Our power is truly God's power. God's grace is that which strengthens us. And it's when we're apart from Him, when we're distant from Him, that that grace gets weaker, that that strength goes weaker. And God wants us to cleave to Him, to lean on Him. As someone put it, take Him, ye wretched, for your only good. I think it's based on what George Whitefield had said.

Take Him, ye wretched, for your only good. Take Him, ye starving souls, to be your food. We need to take Him. He is our strength. He is our food.

He is our source. He is our grace. He is our good. And we live to worship, to glorify Him. It's grace that drives us closer to Him.

[14:05] He urges us, draw nigh. to me, and I will draw nigh unto you. Grace. It's a wonder, isn't it, that grace saved us even, that we're even saved.

I trust those that know salvation. It's a gift, graciously granted, that we're undeserving of, and how we should rejoice in it, and be so thankful, ever thankful, daily thankful, moment by moment thankful, for that grace.

That grace-filled heart. It was His doing. We should seek God for that grace, to have that holy devotion, that holy resolution, to have that walk of grace.

And that means giving up our idols, giving up our self, our selfish ways, handing over our weakness, and transferring His strength, for our weakness.

And grace, it means life lived to the full. Grace is what makes life really purposeful and meaningful for us, because we know, our Saviour's love.

[15:18] We know His will. Be strong in the grace, that is in Christ Jesus, Paul writes. Grace gives us the strength, that we need, for the daily battles, that we have to encounter.

Grace gives us strength, to overcome. Grace gives us strength, to forgive, to love, to go the second mile. I know, as a church, we drive some 100 kilometres a week, to pick people up for church, when we were reckoning on the church bus.

That's a lot of kilometres, isn't it? You need to go the second mile. Go the 100 kilometres. Go further than you have to go, to not care just for yourself, but for others.

To go beyond your own strength, to go beyond your own, capacity, and rely on His strength, not your own. And to take seriously, your soul's condition.

When we go strong, when we are strong in His grace, we consider our soul's condition. We consider our inadequacy. We're moved by the burden for souls.

[16 : 33] We're urged by our Master to labour, in His harvest. When grace is working in us, we learn humility.

We learn to depend on the Lord, to depend on the Holy Spirit, to depend on His will, to seek that conformity to His will, to develop that, to develop our diligence, our being on guard, to grow in grace, and be strong in grace.

And thirdly, Colossians 4.6, another aspect is to speak in grace, to speak in grace. Colossians 4.6, we're to grow in grace, not just to receive it as salvation, but to walk it, in the walk of life, in the walk of faith, to grow in grace, to be strong in grace, to find that power, to overcome that power, to be more like Christ.

And thirdly, to speak in grace, to speak in grace. Now, Colossians 4.6, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man.

Seasoned with salt. Let your speech be always with this, Paul writes. Now, I don't know about you, and I don't mean to be flippant here, but fish and chips just doesn't taste right without side of vinegar.

[18 : 01] I don't know if anyone say amen to that. Amen. You've got to have the seasoning. To make it have that special taste. And God wants your speech to always, always be seasoned with the salt of grace, as it were.

Your speech should always be accompanied by that. Your speech should always be accompanied by grace. It should always be with grace. It should always be gracious.

Just like your food is seasoned, with salt, pepper, vinegar, your speech should always be seasoned with grace. It's something that should always be evident and present.

Let your words always have grace. really, you can speak with new tongues. You can speak with the tongue of grace. It's a new tongue that God gives to us, isn't it, when we say, saved.

I know it's particularly evident in some that it would appear they're not saved by how they speak. Now that's maybe a generalisation.

[19 : 09] Now that's maybe a generalisation. But I believe when you get saved, God changes your language. He puts a new tongue in your mouth. He gives you a heavenly language. The language of no guile, of no corruption.

Now there may still be moments, because there's flesh still there, that we say words unwise, as we know and can do. But our lips should be filled with sweet, gracious, witnessing words.

Words that are gracious. As the words of Peter, in Acts 11, verse 14, some are directed to go to him, in Acts 11, 14, to hear words from him.

That's Acts 11, 14. I believe it's Cornelius' household, is it?

Yeah. They were directed to go to him, Acts 11, 14, to Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

[20 : 24] It's like was prayed earlier, isn't it? It's not like routinely God would send angels, but he routinely sends human beings like you and me, with lips, with tongues, with words, to tell, whereby people can be saved.

And so, vital it is, that you are that vessel that he can use, that he can use your sweet, gracious, witnessing words, so that others can hear.

And gracious should be your words. It takes courage and strength to have that speaking in grace, because naturally we lack it.

To speak those words that edify, those words that bless, those words that witness, the words that testify, it takes grace. God wants you to speak in grace, to resist your natural response, and to give a supernatural response.

You know, we all can be frayed and tested and utter words, hasty words, idle words, careless words, but God wants us always to have that seasoning, to have that accompaniment, that every word is spoken with grace, always with grace.

[21 : 43] There's so much more we can say about grace. In Acts 13, 43, it says, grace can be continued in. We should continue in the grace. We should apply grace, continue in grace.

We are to continue, there's many verses that talk of continuing, for example, continuing the Lord's word, the Lord's love, in faith, in witnessing, in prayer, in charity, in doctrine, in brotherly love.

We're to continue, but particularly continue in grace. Grace is something that we should apply and demonstrate. Let grace be your badge.

let grace be your motto, your code of conduct. We know of soldiers or even footy players, their code of conduct, their conduct can be unbecoming.

Can't it? We see even golf players, the world even expects a certain standard of them, just as the pubs expect a certain standard of dress as you would enter their establishment.

[22 : 48] But where is the standard in the church of God? It should be grace, shouldn't it? It should be grace. Grace helps us. Grace guides us and makes us more like Christ and really it's our key to contentment.

Grace. If we could just have the grace of God, the grace that God shows to us to put up with us, that's grace, isn't it? God to endure our wanderings and failings and faults moment by moment that God and His grace should save us, number one, but His grace should still remain with us is another wonder, isn't it?

And grace is something we can be thankful for every day. The key to contentment. John Newton said, everything is needful that he sends, nothing is needful that he withholds.

Sometimes in our lack of grace, we're looking and searching and discontent and finding something to complain about or something to be unhappy about, something that we don't have but we think we are entitled to have.

As this writer puts it, everything is needful that he sends, nothing is needful that he withholds. We've just got to accept it from his hand, whether it's delays, whether it's frustration, whether it's antagonism, whether it's fightings within without, whether it's family or friends.

[24 : 21] Be gracious. Learn to live grace. Everything is in his hands. Every irritation is needful for the shaping of my character.

We don't like it at the time, do we? Every cloudy sky is needful for the strengthening of my faith.

Every withheld dream, it was unneeded for my present happiness.

What you have is his grace. And yet he sends every comforting scripture needful for the confirmation of my faith. He gives every bursting flower needful to remind me of the joy of the Lord. He blesses me with every encouraging friend, needful to inspire me on to higher planes. And most of all, he gives me himself. And he is all I need.

What an amazing saviour. So true, isn't it? Grace to help in time of need. It's there for you. In your time of need, there's grace to help. Friends, there's so much more we could say.

[25 : 29] But let grace be lived out. Let it be evident. Think of the scriptures that come to us in the word of his grace. For example, be diligent.

God rewards those that diligently seek him, it says. In Hebrews 11, 6. So we should be diligent. We should diligently seek him. Not just carelessly.

Some flippantly seek him. They seek him when they feel like it. But God says he rewards those who diligently seek him.

We can expect fiery trials. The word says that we'll face that. Grace will help you to go through those. The word says work out your own salvation in fear and trembling.

God will help you to do that. He'll give you the grace to do that. The word says study to show yourself approved unto God. It says endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 34] Just to close, examine yourselves, it says, whether you are in the faith. 2 Corinthians 13, 5. His grace is sufficient. As Paul found, as much as Paul prayed, man of faith and man of God, yet God said no to him.

Sometimes grace will say no to you. Grace will say my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness. His grace will say that to us sometimes.

Our requests may be denied because his grace knows better for us. Think of God's amazing grace and live by it.

In 2 Corinthians 1, verse 12, it says, for our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you would.

So, in other words, Paul said he didn't rejoice in his fleshly wisdom and his human wisdom. He didn't rejoice in all manner of things that we know he could have credited his background, his training, his knowledge.

[27 : 54] He said he didn't give any credit to that, but by the grace of God we've had our conversation in the world. We've ordered our behaviour, we've had our conduct ordered by grace, by grace, live by it and abound in it.

2 Corinthians 9, 8 to close, and God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.

God is able to make every grace abound toward you, that you having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.

Grace is our victory. Grace is our victory. Just to recap briefly, grace, grow in it. If you're saved tonight, you have his grace, he's granted it to you.

It's yours forever, for eternity. But we must grow in it. Don't just stay thus far, extend yourself.

Increase that faith, increase that grace, let it be more evident, grow in it.

[29 : 07] Let it be a grace that you will grow in, that you'll be strong in, that you'll be strong as a Christian, not a wishy-washy weak one, a strong Christian, you'll grow in grace, you'll have power to overcome.

And you'll speak in grace, so that the words you speak are gracious words, sweet words, words of witness, words of testimony, words that will project Christ to others, words that will share the gospel with others, because you are his conduit, you are his channel, you are the one.

He uses human vessels still, today, in the 21st century. There's no other method, there's no different methodology, it's the same today as it was back then, and as that man was directed to Peter, he shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

Whose words? Your words. Unless you witness, then they will not hear. It's critical and vital that you are witnessing for Christ, and there's opportunity every day for that.

Gracious words, let them be words of witness from your lips. It must be your lips opened, it must be your tongue moving, it must be your mouth, mouth it.

[30 : 31] I know I'm encouraged and I've sought to make it my practice when there's a visitor comes to speak to them. They could be the only opportunity we have to witness to them.

We don't know where anyone's at, really and truly, but there's opportunity, there's those New Testament underlined with a sequence to follow, that's quite helpful, there's opportunity to share the scriptures and do so, take that opportunity wherever it presents, to let your speech be always with grace.

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