

The Power of Grace - How God Transforms a Life

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[0:00] One of the great words of the Bible, the great word grace.

We'll shortly turn to 1 Timothy 1 and talk about really what is one of the most precious grace. Let us pray. Lord we thank you for your word as we come unto it. It's the word of your grace.

Lord as the spirit of grace works in our hearts. Lord let us be a people of grace that as we come unto the throne of grace we'll know your great grace upon us and within us working in us and through us and to others by us. Lord by your spirit. Lord be glorified in your church and help us to take to heart these precious truths and make them real in our lives we pray.

For your glory Lord Jesus we ask. Amen. One of the great words of the Bible, the great word grace. And grace is a central theme of the Bible. It's really right through the book. And there was a preacher of old John Bunyan who wrote his autobiography while serving 12 years of a prison sentence simply for preaching the gospel. He was locked up simply for preaching the gospel in an unauthorized setting because the establishment church didn't approve of John Bunyan. And he wrote this book and it's titled *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. And with a subtitle or a brief relation of the exceeding mercy of God in Christ to his poor servant John Bunyan. And Bunyan's turning point in his life came when he heard a sermon on the topic of God's grace. He realized that no matter how terrible his sins were

God's grace was sufficient to forgive him. And Bunyan's account was based on the scripture that tells of Paul's testimony as we'll turn there to 1 Timothy chapter 1. Of course John Bunyan also wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*.

[2:23] People would be more familiar with that than his autobiography. But 1 Timothy 1.14 is Paul praising the grace of God. We see 1 Timothy 1.14 it reads, *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundance with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Of course we know Saul as he was was a persecutor of the believers and yet almighty God shook his world and turned it around and he trusted Christ on that road to Damascus and was the use of God ever since. Think of grace. Think of grace. God's grace. Grace is essential. What is grace?

The Bible often mentions grace in contrast to the law. Of course we know the law of God is meant for our schooling to enlighten us to our sinful heart and of our need of the saving of God. And it's been reckoned there's some 613 laws. It's not just the 10 commandments. There's 613 laws some have reckoned have counted up and multiplied laws. Of course it's impossible for us to keep the law. And it reads, *For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* That's John 1.17.

So we've got law given by Moses. We've got grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. So in contrast we see to the law we see grace and we see that God's grace is especially evident as being a gift. Grace is a gift.

We do not deserve it. We do not earn it. There's a great treasure store of grace. It tells us Ephesians 2.7-9 that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. *For by grace are ye saved through faith that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.* So we see grace saves, we receive by faith the gift of God. It's not of works. It's not of the law or the works of the law.

[5:05] It's entirely of God's gracious giving his gift. Of course we know the classic verse John 3.16 where it tells us how God has made his gracious provision for all. *God so loved the world.*

Then God's invitation of grace is extended to all that whosoever believeth on him. Then it tells of the reception of God's grace, his offer of grace that can be received by whosoever will believe, can receive his pardon, his great salvation. So we see there salvation by grace in its provision, the world in its invitation, whosoever, its reception believe. Provision, invitation, reception.

And so the recipients of this gracious gift, the gracious gift of God's grace are entirely dependent upon the gracious look of God towards them. We see the word of God tells of the look of grace as it reads of Noah.

Here is the first mention of God's grace, the very first mention in the word of God where it tells how God's grace. Now in that sinful world, the wicked world of the day, God saw Noah and he looked upon Noah with grace. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Interestingly that was in the midst of this wicked environment, the whole world being given over to wickedness that God looked and he saw Noah. He looked with the eyes of grace, didn't he? He looked upon him. And what is the law of first mention? It's a kind of principle or guideline that some used to study the scripture and the law of first mention puts out that we can understand a particular word or a doctrine, especially where we first find it in the scripture. The first place in scripture reveals that word or doctrine and then it leads to further study. So the first mention is often the simplest and clearest presentation and then doctrines are more fully developed from that foundation. So to fully understand an important and complex theological concept,

Bible students are often pointed to have a look where the first mention is because that can then guide how we can unpack that. So the first mention of grace, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. It's an important thought, isn't it? That it's in God's eyes as he looks upon you, that he looks upon you with grace and don't we want that? That he looks on us with grace rather than wrath, that he looks upon us with love and compassion with his saving grace rather than his condemnation. God is the source of grace, that he is the God of grace. Of course elsewhere we read he's the God of all comfort, so it's his very nature is grace. All grace is by God, isn't it? God is gracious, so full of grace and grace comes from the gracious hand of our God. Thank God he looks upon you that are saved. He looks upon you with grace today and if you're yet to be saved you can pray that he'll look upon you with grace. You can seek his grace, you can pray for his grace to be upon you, but you can be saved. And really grace is the salvation story. The story of grace is the gospel. Paul describes how he was saved and now looking forward he says he's got a course to run, he's got a running race to run and he's got a ministry to fulfill which is received of the Lord

[9:02] Jesus and he says what is his ministry? To testify of the grace of God, the gospel of the grace of God. So the gospel, the good news story is the grace of God. Grace is God's kindness towards us. As it reads in Titus 3 verse 4, it tells us after that the kindness and love of God our saviour towards man appeared.

Grace is the love of God, it's his very kindness. We don't deserve it, we're unworthy of it. We're glad recipients of it by faith. Grace is God reaching downwards to man in rebellion towards him and his justification is by grace. We read that in Romans 3 verse 24. It tells us being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Redemption meaning like liberation, like the freedom of slaves being set free. He's justified us, he's declared us righteous, he's given us his merit freely and graciously totally apart from any human merit. As we know it reads elsewhere in Titus 3 verse 5, that it's not of works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Not by works of righteousness. The some that mistakenly have the thought that salvation is through some works, some merits, some credit of our own, of our own making, of our own undertaking. There's no performance system, there's no performance system to save you. Grace is the means of salvation in all of its dimensions. We're justified freely by his grace, not by any manufacturing, or nothing of our own undertaking, but all of his provision, all of his giving, his gift. None of our performance can merit salvation. Some do mistakenly teach a works-based salvation, as if somehow we've got to do, keep doing, obey, keep obeying. We've got to make it about our works, but it's none of that. That's a mistake.

It's entirely freely by his grace, the free gift of God. And grace is that means of salvation in all of its dimensions. It says in Acts 15 11, it says, we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Friends, that's our only hope is the grace of God. Our only plea, our only entry is through the grace of God. So trust his grace. Look at who got grace in the Bible. There's

grace, grace, grace right through the Bible in the lives of men and women of many kinds. We could name so many, just some, to contemplate today. Adam and Eve. After they sinned, eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God showed them grace, didn't he? He extended grace to them. He provided clothes to them and an animal was slain that they could be covered. The blood had to be shed and the grace of God covered their nakedness in Genesis 3:21. And we see Noah, as we read before, God showed grace to Noah, sparing him and his family from the flood. While he destroyed the rest of the earth,

Noah found grace. We see Abraham, God showed grace to Abraham by making a covenant with him, promising to bless him and make of him a great nation in Genesis 12. Joseph, God showed grace to Joseph by giving him favour with Pharaoh, making him second in command in Egypt, allowing him to save his family and many others from famine. Genesis 37 through 50. Moses, another one. God showed grace to Moses, calling him to lead the Israelites out of slavery, giving him the power to serve and to minister. David, look at David.

God shows grace when we are undeserving of it. God showed grace to David, forgiving him after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. Grace. Mary. God showed grace to Mary by choosing her to be the mother of Jesus, the saviour of the world in Luke 1:26 through 38. Paul, again, God gave grace to Paul such that he could testify as we read before, the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. God's grace was exceeding abundant. He could say, I'm the chief of sinners, just like Bunyan. Bunyan told his story warts and all of how he had a wicked time before he was saved, but God's grace was abundant. God's grace is abundant and we could reckon too where sin abounds, God's grace does much more abound. Isn't that a wonderful blessing to know? We can't be too sinful that his grace. God's grace cannot save us. We simply have to trust and turn to him to know his grace.

[14:36] God showed grace to Jonah, rescuing him. Despite his disobedience and his miserable attempt to be a reluctant prophet, God gave grace to Jonah and gave him a second commission to preach to Nineveh.

God showed grace to Job, restoring his fortunes and blessing him more than he had before after he did suffer greatly and was tested for his faith. Daniel, another one. God showed grace to Daniel, protecting him from harm when he was thrown into the lion's den for his faith. It's grace, isn't it? Grace, grace, more grace. Marvelous grace. Esther. God showed grace to Esther by giving her favour with the king, using her to save her people and from the plot to kill them.

Peter showed grace to God, wasn't he? Peter denied the Lord. Not once, not twice, but three times. Denied his precious Lord. Peter was restored to the position of one of the early leaders of the church and God showed him grace. You wonder when Peter denied our Lord, it says the Lord looked at him.

[16:00] There's one occasion where it says, and the cock crew, and then our Lord looked at him. He was ashamed. He was ashamed about his backsliding, about his failure, but God showed grace. I wonder if the eyes of Jesus looked on Peter with grace that day. We see the thief on the cross. God showed grace to that thief, this miserable man. He had nothing to recommend himself. Here he was, this criminal. He'd done nothing to deserve it. Yet our Lord promised him eternal life, paradise, that very day. He'd done nothing to deserve it. He couldn't get baptised. He couldn't go to church. He couldn't do anything.

He couldn't do any good works. He could do nothing. But grace saved him. And then we think, for example, the prodigal son, another example. God showed grace in the picture of the father welcoming the prodigal, welcoming him back with open arms. After he'd squandered his inheritance, after he'd lived a life of sin and reckless, riotous living. Yet grace welcomed him and embraced him, received him to the father's heart.

So we see many examples of grace. It's right through the word of God, right through the scriptures. And not only are we recipients of grace, we're also communicators of grace. We've got the gospel of grace ourselves. We've got the gospel, the good news, the saving grace of God, the gospel, good news. And we are called to be communicators of it. What's more, we're called to be a community of grace. We see of the early church, it reads in Acts 4:33, and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Think of it, that the community of God, the congregation, the household of God, the assembly of

God's people, the congregation, the church. It says that great grace was upon them all. Wouldn't that be good for great grace to be upon us all? That God's grace would be such an atmosphere in our worship, in our fellowship. Grace has that wonderful influence, doesn't it? That we can receive it and know it amongst ourselves within our community of faith. And grace has transformative power. The church of God is meant to be a community of grace. And may we also be agents of his grace, such that when we leave this holy assembly, as it were, that we are taking this message of grace. We're taking that gospel message, the gospel of his grace, to those who need to hear it, as we're agents of it, transmitting that power of grace. Grace is something we should exercise with one another too. When we think of grace, it's a true strength of our Christian walk. We see Paul exhorts Timothy, thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. When we think of how we should be strengthening our faith, one of the big things is to have a stronger grace, to have a stronger grace, as it were, in how we should want to be and to live. So what does this grace actually look like? What is grace? Well, how would we know grace if we were looking at it, looking for it? I put to you that grace is most fully expressed in one person.

Of course, we know who that is, don't we? Our Lord Jesus, yes. Grace is Jesus Christ. It's who he is. He is full of grace. It reads, of him, of the word, our Lord Jesus, who was made flesh, he dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus is our role model, isn't he? He's full of grace, full of truth. We think about grace, it's the nature of Jesus, isn't it? Grace is the character of Jesus. Grace is the heart of Jesus.

When we see how he lived and interacted with people, how he went to the lowly and the the lost, the hurting, the forsaken, and he showed grace, didn't he?

[20:26] Grace, grace, marvelous grace. And grace is that likeness to Jesus that we ought to have, isn't it?

He shows what grace looks like. He's the embodiment of grace. He's grace personified. The more of Jesus that we have, the more of his grace. And his grace satisfies. We come to the throne of his grace.

Grace. When we need grace, there's a throne we can receive the grace from. When we have any need, in time of need, it says we can pray. We can come boldly there and receive his very grace, because he is the one who promises and offers us grace. We can find grace there in the time of need.

And I know there's needs amongst us of people going through some things. I know numbers of you tell me what's going on, things that you're going through, and you think, it's pretty hard right now. There's tough things happening. There's always the place of grace that you can go to, the throne of God, the throne of his grace. And you can go there any time of day or night in that time of need. And he's a refuge and strength in the time of trouble, isn't he? In the time of need. He's a very present help in time of need. And there's grace to help in time of need. So, if you've got a need here tonight, and look, all of us have a need of one thing or another, there's grace. There's grace for you. Amen. There's grace for you. There's grace for me.

And there's a throne of grace. So there's that privilege that we have to enter in and ask God for that need to meet that need. And we can rely on his grace, can't we? His grace is sufficient as well.

[22:17] His grace is sufficient for you. And grace, God's grace is enough for you. Whatever is going on for you. As we know, the occasion where Paul was struggling with this thorn in the flesh, this struggle, this need, this problem, this frustration, this difficulty, this trial. And he prayed and he prayed. And God answered him in 2 Corinthians 12 verse 9, and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee. For my strength is made perfect in weakness. And most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. So Paul learned, and sometimes God's answer to prayer is no. God's answer to prayer might be no, not yet. And we have to take that answer and hear God's wisdom in the situation that he knows the best. And his strength is going to be made perfect in our weakness, in our time of need, in that time of difficulty. He's all the more present. He's all the more sufficient. And his grace is all the more enough for you, whatever it be that is on your mind.

And so we can take heart tonight. When struggles come, when difficulties strike, when hardship and hurts happen, that his grace is sufficient. Grace is enough for you. And God's grace is big enough to see us through whatever life throws our way, whatever curveballs, whatever challenges.

Grace sustains us and helps us. Grace enables us and lifts us and fulfills us. His grace is sufficient, he says, for thee. And grace sustains us and also it trains us. We see, for example, Titus 2 talks about how grace is our teacher. Grace is our teacher. Paul writes in Titus 2, 11, So for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. So notice how it reads there, the grace of God has appeared to all men. Salvation is a wide appeal. The salvation message goes worldwide, that God's grace that brings salvation hath appeared to all men. And it tells us how we should then learn, how he should teach us, how we should be training. Through grace, he trains us how to live soberly, righteously and godly.

In a way, grace is our personal trainer, if you like. Grace is our life coach, isn't it? Grace is our life coach, isn't it? He trains us. So as we take hold of, as it's called, the word of his grace, as we take hold of this grace instruction manual, we'll learn more about how to be like Jesus, how to walk in his ways and to know of his truth. And he trains us, grace trains us, it teaches us how to live. And here's what John Wesley said, grace transforms us from the inside out and enables us to live for God. I think that's a good quote. Grace transforms us from the inside out and enables us to live for God. And another thing about grace is, is that it's like a language. Now I was talking with some people today saying they're learning French and some people are learning this or that language and I know I'm still learning English myself. But we see that the Bible talks about grace as being like a language in a way, isn't it?

And Paul tells the Colossians, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man. So grace impacts us practically in how we speak and what we say.

[26:50] Let it be with grace. Think of how it's talking about how you ought to answer every man. You've got a message, you've got a hope that is in you. If someone asks you a reason of that hope that is in you, that you'll have an answer for them. You'll give them a godly answer, a Bible answer, a salvation testimony. You can share that. That's the grace that you can speak, always with grace. So have that heart, that grace would speak from the heart. The mouth speaks, isn't it? And so here's what another famous preacher said. This is Jonathan Edwards, an old time preacher, of course a renowned man of God.

And he said this, grace is the overflowing love of God that is poured into our hearts and souls, making us whole and holy. The overflowing love of God poured into our hearts and souls, making us whole, as in with a w, whole, and holy, with an h, holy. So God's grace, it keeps on giving and it impacts us practically in our practical lives, in how we act and speak. And another aspect of grace is that grace grows. It's not a static thing. So when you're saved, that's just the beginning. There's a walk, there's a growing, there's a walking, there's a journey, there's a discipleship, a sanctification, a growing in holiness. And that grace that he gives to us, that he imparts to us, that impacts us, that we are likewise living through the power of his grace. And grace grows, it says, as it reads here in 2 Peter 3, verse 18. Peter exhorts the folk, he says, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. So he's saying there that grace should be a growing thing. You don't get saved and then it's static and you just, nothing happens.

There's a growing that he wants for us, that we're exhorted to. We're exhorted to grow, to grow in grace, to grow in that knowledge. And our whole Christian life, when you think about it, depends upon God's grace. For our saving and then for our walk beyond our salvation.

We're saved, but then there's the sanctification path. And grace is from go to woe, isn't it? It's from beginning to end. We're saved by grace and then there's a sense where our justification, our sanctification, our spiritual life all hinges upon, depends on God's grace. When you think about it, grace empowers us to do right. Grace enables holy living. As we were exhorted before, teaching us

how to live soberly, righteously, godly, grow in grace. So how do we get such grace? I put to you tonight, it starts with humility. And it's like God bypasses the proud, the prideful. Our Lord has made provision for us to be saved. The grace of God has appeared to all men. And yet, it seems some are too proud, they're too prideful to bow the knee. They're too prideful to say, I need a saviour. Too prideful to say,

[30:15] I'm a sinner. I'm a wretch, wretched in my sin. Our Lord has made provision. May we humble ourselves and receive the gift. May we humble ourselves and say, it's not my righteousness, it's yours I need.

It's not my works, it's your finished work that I need. It's not my doing or being, it's trusting, you're saving. May we humble ourselves and see our need of his saving. It's really the starting point of being saved to see our sinful estate, our great lack, our great need of forgiveness, of God's saving power. We cannot save ourselves. We must humble ourselves and come to the saviour, say, Lord, I know I cannot save myself, I need you to save me. And it's that humble heart, that open heart that his truth can lodge in and save. It's like that soil that is soft that will receive the seed, the word of God to say, Lord, break up my heart, make it soft towards you. May I be sensitive towards you. May I realise my need of you. Rather than being prideful and thinking, oh, you know, I don't need a saviour. Yes, I need a saviour. Be like Bunyan in that prison cell, that he gave all the praise to God. He gave all the glory to the grace of God. It wasn't anything of Bunyan, but it was grace abounding to the chief of sinners. And that's what it is for every one of us, isn't it? It tells us that he gives more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Have that heart that is humble enough to see your need of the saviour today. And as safe people too, let's keep that humble heart. Let's keep that humility of heart, that humble spirit. Peter talks about to be clothed with humility. It should be something that we wear.

It should be something, that should be the dress code. I kind of joke around a little. That's the dress code of the church is that we're clothed with humility, clothed with humility. That we would have that, we'd wrap ourselves in a humble heart, a humble attitude, knowing that everything that we have, all the good that we are is all thanks to his grace. All the blessings, all the, all the anything of good that we have is all because he's given it to us. And we can be entirely reliant on that, the grace of God. And so Peter closes really these thoughts with, well, this is an opening statement, but many times we see grace and peace joined together in the letters of the different letters of the New Testament where we see grace. Grace is often here, it's in the foreword of this letter to Peter 1, but we see often in the closing verses, we see grace, it's oftentimes referred to.

You might want to take a time, you know, get your concordance out and have a look. How many times grace is talked about? It's a recurring theme. And there's many more verses we could touch on, really we just scratched the surface here tonight. But Peter says, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Peter wants these readers to to have grace and to have grace multiplied, have grace that is a multiplied kind of grace. How would you describe that? That you've got grace to the nth degree, that you'll have grace that's overflowing and abounding. And it's all through the knowledge of our Lord, isn't it? As we know him more, he works more grace in us. So just to recap, grace, the greatest word, certainly one of the greatest words in the Bible. We see it's a gift, salvation. Simply receive it. Simply receive it. How simple it is, yet profound. That it's entirely a gift. Receive that gift. Think of the look of God, that he would look upon you like he looked upon Noah, that he would look upon you in such a sinful world and his look would be towards you with grace. Don't we want his gracious look? Don't we want the gracious God to look upon us with his grace? We see the story of the gospel, it's the gospel of his grace. We see the community of grace, the very church of God. We should be grace-filled people. We should be gracious people. We should be gracious and graceful people. A community of God's grace. Saved sinners. None of us deserving. All of us gratefully, graciously rejoicing for his grace. We see the throne of his grace, that we can come before his throne of grace at any time and know he will supply our need. We see that grace is like a teacher.

His lesson book is here. The gracious teacher that is grace wants to teach us how to live righteously, soberly, godly in Christ Jesus. He's a teacher. He wants us to live it out. He wants us to have a language, that we speak grace, that we have gracious words and that our faith, our grace will grow and keep on growing. We'll want to be more of those grace-filled people that he wants us to be. And it all starts with that humility that we talked about, the humility that will... God doesn't give grace to the proud but he gives grace to the humble. So let us bow our knees and our hearts, our

will to humble ourselves before him. I pray here tonight that you might know the grace of God, the gospel of his grace, that Jesus has come and he is the one who embodies grace. That God in his unmerited kindness would come and humble himself so to take human form, to be a man, a real man, the perfect man. God manifest in the flesh and to be the saviour of the world as we would trust him. He is grace. It's receiving him, is to receive the grace of God, his salvation. I pray if you've yet to trust him that you would call upon him, that you would know his saving, that you would say, yes I'm one of the chief of sinners,

[36:58] I'm just as bad as Paul, I'm just as unworthy of his saving grace but I will receive it, I will receive it. And so, and it's interesting, Saul became Paul and Paul means little, it means small.

We need to be made small, don't we? It's like John the Baptist, he must increase and I must decrease. You know, he must have all of me and I must be made small. I must humble myself to be his vessel, that he would save me and he can do that by his grace. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that your grace is abounding to the chief of sinners. We could think of ourselves just as unworthy as the next man or woman. Lord, we know that your grace abounds, still abounds and where sin abounds even, that your grace can even much more abound. And Lord, we thank you for these things. Lord, help us each one to know your grace in our own lives and to live it out such that we'll be such a people that be to your praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.