

AM Ephesians 2:1-10 Grace alone

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[0 : 00] Well, let us turn now to the Word of God in the New Testament in Ephesians chapter 2. I'm sure a passage that will be familiar to us.

I can remember in my young days, in fact, this reading from this morning being encouraged to get it off Baha'i. But, and it's a good passage to know off Baha'i.

Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

[1 : 13] It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by works so that no one can boast.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Amen.

And may God add his blessing to the reading of his word. Let us pray. Our heavenly Father, as once again we bow before you.

May your word be our rule. Your spirit our teacher. And your greater glory our supreme concern. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[2 : 20] Amen. Amen. We of course stand in the tradition of the Reformation. That great movement that brought the church back to the biblical basis of the Christian faith.

And at the heart of that great movement which people today tend to forget shaped modern Europe as we know it in terms of democracy and science and education.

And folks sometimes find science. How does that fit in? Interestingly it was the Puritans who put science onto the school timetable against the pressure of the establishment.

And an analysis of the royal society which is the august scientific body in Great Britain.

I think it was something like 70% of its original membership were card carrying Puritans. And that was just after the restoration of the crown.

[3 : 28] When it was dangerous to be a card carrying Puritan. So the Reformation shaped modern Europe in terms of democracy and science and education.

But what I want to hone in on this morning is that at the heart of this great movement were three great watchwords. Sola Scriptura.

Scripture alone. As our authority for faith and life. Not the church. Not church assemblies. Not reason. Or philosophy. But scripture alone. I always remember a professor of philosophy from Amsterdam.

Pointing out there is only one field of human research. Where that which is researched has total authority over the researcher.

[4 : 30] And that is theology. The scientist chooses what he is going to research. And how he is going to research it.

But in theology. We submit to the authority of scripture. Sola Scriptura. Sola Fide. Faith alone. And I want to return to that theme this evening.

Faith as the only way to lay hold of the gift of God. And the third cry. Sola Scriptura. Sola Fide. Faith alone.

Sola Gratia. Grace alone. The truth that we are saved not by what we are or what we do. But solely through the grace of God. In Christ dying for us on the cross.

Grace. And I am sure you know the mnemonic. To remember grace. Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. God's riches at Christ's expense.

[5 : 36] And the Bible of course is full of references to the grace of God. And indeed someone has said that the word grace. Is unquestionably the most significant single word in the Bible.

In the prologue to his gospel. John notes. John 1 verse 16. From the fullness of his grace. We have all received one blessing after another.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth. Came through Jesus Christ. In Romans 3 we find the gospel in a nutshell.

Romans 3 verse 23 and 24. For all have sinned. And fall short of the glory of God. And are justified freely by his grace. Through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Take the letters of the New Testament. They commonly begin and end. With reference to the grace of God. For example Philippians.

[6 : 40] Philippians chapter 1 verse 1. I Paul and Timothy servants of Christ Jesus. To all God's holy people. Philippi. Grace and peace to you.

From God our Father. And the Lord Jesus Christ. And then Paul. Ends the letter. Philippians 4 verse 23. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be with your spirit. Amen. And we are encouraged. To grow in this grace. To develop in our experience.

The blessings and privileges. Of the grace of God. It's not something static. But dynamic. 2 Peter 3 verse 18. But grow.

In grace. And knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And that. Reminds us. Then that grace. Isn't static. Some static confirming.

[7 : 37] Of God's love and kindness. But something dynamic. Something to grow. Something we have to experience. In a moment by moment way. And the last verse of the Bible.

Refers to God's grace. Revelations 22. 21. The grace. The grace. Of the Lord Jesus. Be with God's people. But what is grace?

It was the grace of God. That changed Paul. From the great persecutor of the church. Into the great missionary. Of the church. It was the discovery.

Of the grace of God. That turned the life of Martin Luther. Upside down. And set the reformation. On its way. You remember that Luther. Had done all the required devotions.

He had done all the various penances. That he could think of. He tried. To be as good a person. As he possibly could be. But he knew something was missing. And what was missing.

[8 : 39] Was his discovery. Of the grace of God. A discovery. That it was not what he did. Or what he aspired to be. That mattered.

But rather that God. And Christ. Had done all that was necessary. For him to be forgiven. And adopted into the family of God. So what is grace?

Grace. And it seems to be. All too often. We use this term loosely. And words. Slide off their meanings.

As the years go by. And we've got to be careful. About that. The biblical word. Translated grace. Don't carry the normal sense.

Of the English word. That we use today. We tend to think of grace. As a sort of personal virtue. Let me read to you.

[9 : 40] From the IVP. New Dictionary of Theology. And it says this. The biblical words. Translated grace.

Are hen in the Hebrew. And charis in the Greek. And neither word. Carries the usual sense. Of the English word grace. Implying a personal virtue.

They indicate. They indicate rather. An objective relation. Of undeserved favor. By a superior. To an inferior.

Which in the case of divine grace. Towards mankind. Accompanies the idea. Of covenant. And election. What is grace. What is grace.

It is. An undeserved favor. By a superior. To an inferior. Grace does something.

[10 : 43] B.B. Warfield. Said this. Of grace. Grace. Is power. It does not instruct.

It energises. And what dead men need. Is energising. Such energising. As raises the dead. Or we could think of John Newton's.

Well known hymn. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me. The grace that saved. That did something. That was power. That brought new life.

To John Newton. So in the Bible. Grace refers to the undeserved favor. of a superior. To an inferior.

Grace does something. Particularly. The salvation. That a holy and a perfect God. Confers upon sinners. Now.

[11 : 44] There is a sort of limited. But I think helpful illustration. In Victor Hugo's novel. Les Miserables. And some folk know this better.

Of course. From the popular musical. But in the novel. Victor Hugo. Tells the story. Of a convict. Valjean. Who finds refuge.

In the church. And he is given food. And shelter. But then he decides. To steal some of the church's silver. And make off.

But Valjean is caught. And brought back to the church. Back before the bishop. In the story. And when the police ask. If it is true. That he has stolen the silver.

The bishop. Surprisingly says no. And then he turns to Valjean. And tells him. That he had forgotten. To take the rest of the silver. As well. And after the police have gone.

[12 : 42] The bishop indicates. That he has acted in this way. To save Valjean. And challenges him. To go and do something useful. With his life. And that is a sort of picture of grace.

Remember. The biblical meaning of grace. Is that of unmerited favor. From a superior. To an inferior. And the bishop. And the bishop. And the bishop.

And the bishop. Bestowing upon Valjean. Protection. And the church's silver. It is also in a social sense. A picture of a superior.

granting a favor. To an inferior. The criminal Valjean. The bishop. Is economically. Morally.

Socially. Superior. To Valjean. But he gives him something. He does something for him. And that is a picture of grace.

[13 : 41] The biblical story tells. Of the unmerited favor of God. In granting us forgiveness. And adoption into his family. But of course. The bible also tells us.

That God in Christ. Bears the punishment of our sin. In order to grant us forgiveness. So I suppose to get. A truly biblical parol. With the bishop in Valjean.

The bishop would have had to have taken. The place of Valjean. And served his sentence. Under the law. Now it seems to be. One of the best places. To consider this whole issue.

Of grace. Is Ephesians 2. 1 to 10. Which we read. Because it's a wonderful exposition. Of this theme. And let's just. Turn to that passage.

And look at these verses. And it begins with. Reminding us. Of man's problem. That he is. Spiritually.

[14 : 37] Dead. Verse 1. As for you. You were dead. In your transgressions. And sins. In which you used to live. When you followed the ways of this world.

Like the rest. We were. By nature. Objects of wrath. And I quite like that Paul starts out. By saying. As for you. You were dead. But then.

He switches to include himself. Like the rest. We. Were. By nature. Objects of wrath. Dead. And.

In the Bible. Death. Refers. Fairly. Frequently. Not to physical death. But to our state. Before God.

Adam and Eve. Are told. That if they eat. The forbidden fruit. On that day. They will die. Well. They don't die. In a physical sense. We know that. From the story. Although.

[15 : 34] That physical death. Is also a result. Of their sin. But the day. That they disobeyed God. They died. Their relationship.

With God. Was at an end. They died. Spiritually. The flower. Cut. And placed. In a vase.

And admired. Is dead. Might look good. But it's dead. Dead. Because it's been separated. From its roots. And so with us.

Sin. Separates. From fellowship. With God. Don't we sometimes. Talk about people. Who have fallen out. With one another. And we say. Their relationship is dead.

They're separated. And Paul. Notes. That we are all. In this condition. Dead. Separated from God.

[16 : 34] Under the wrath of God. God. And that is our. Fundamental problem. God made us. We have broken his laws.

We have sinned. And we are separated. Dead. But then notice verse 4. And I was reading from the.

The NIV. But because of his great love for us. God who is rich in mercy. And the original. That reads more explosively. Because having indicated that we are dead.

Verse 4 begins. But God. We were dead. That's a problem. But God. Has done something. God has done something.

To deal with this condition. In which we find ourselves. And what is it that he has done? Verse 5. He has made us alive. With Christ. Even when we were dead.

[17 : 33] In transgressions. Our relationship. Without God. Dead. But our relationship. Through Christ.

Alive. He has made us alive. He has forgiven us. And not only has he forgiven us. He has conferred upon us. The righteousness of Christ.

And beyond that. He has adopted us into his family. As his sons and his daughters. He has made us alive. No longer dead in sin.

But alive in Christ. Listen to these words from Horatio Bonner. And we're going to sing Bonner's lovely hymn. To close our service this morning.

Bonner writes. All that I was. My sin. My guilt. My death. Was all my own. All that I am. I owe to thee. My gracious God alone.

[18 : 33] All that I am. I owe to thee. My gracious God alone. And we need ever to remind ourselves. That we come to God. Only through the finished work of Christ.

Upon the cross. There is no other way. But God has done something. What has he done? He has made us alive. How has he made us alive?

Continuing in verse 5. Made alive with Christ. Even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace. You have been saved. By grace. It is grace that has done something.

And this was the great truth recovered at the Reformation. You remember that the church in that day. Thought that it was by doing things. That people earned favour with God.

And we see that in the concept of sainthood. In the Roman Catholic Church. The idea of doing something. Had in fact become a terrible corruption.

[19 : 31] In the days of Knox and Luther and Calvin. And indeed the event that sparked Luther. And led to the Reformation. Reformation was the issuing of an indulgence by the Pope.

What happened was that the ecclesiastical coffers in Rome were bare. And to raise some money. The Pope had issued an indulgence. And the indulgence was to the effect.

That if you paid the Pope's representative some money. The Pope would arrange for a reduction. Of the time a soul would have to spend in purgatory. Now this was just utter biblical nonsense.

And Luther rebelled against it. Seeing clearly from scripture that people were saved. Not by being good. Or by giving money to the church.

But solely on the basis of God's grace in Christ. Christ. Bonner again. Not what I feel or do. Can give me peace with God.

[20 : 31] Not all my prayers and sighs and tears. Can bear my awful load. And then succeeding verses go on. Thy work alone O Christ.

Thy grace alone O God. Grace is not some personal virtue. It's not some sentiment. Grace is about something being done.

Being accomplished. Campbell Morgan said cryptically. Grace is love in action. Grace is love in action.

And going on in Ephesians. Coming to verse 6. And God raised us up with Christ. And seated us with him in the heavenly realms. In Christ Jesus.

In order that in the coming ages. He might show the incomparable riches of his grace. Expressed in his kindness to us. In Christ Jesus. The incomparable riches of his grace.

[21 : 31] That come to us. Through Christ. And it is then this grace. That we see in the incarnation. How the eternal son of God.

Left the glory and the splendor of heaven. To become a man. And it is this grace we see in action at Calvary. Where the perfect son of God.

Takes our sin to himself. And pays the price for us. There is an old hymn that goes as follows. Grace tis a charming sound.

Harmonious to mine ear. Heaven with the echo shall resound. And all the earth shall hear. Grace first contrived the way.

To save rebellious man. And all the steps that grace displayed. Which drew the wondrous plan. Grace first inscribed my name.

[22 : 27] In God's eternal book. It was grace that gave me to the Lamb. Who all my sorrows took. And so coming to verse 8.

We have the sort of gospel in a nutshell. For it is by grace. You have been saved through faith. And it's not from yourselves. It is the gift of God.

Not by works. So that no one can boast. And you'll notice there of course. That this reminds us. That we don't need to worry about trying to be good.

Because God's going to forgive us anyway. You'll see there. That by grace having saved us. Not by works so that no one can boast. But it goes on in verse 10.

For we are God's workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. To do good works. Which God prepared in advance. For us to do. So. Drawing our thoughts.

[23 : 31] Together this morning. A quotation from a man. And I quite honestly don't know who he is. But I came across it. That I like. He says.

Grace is what all need. What none can merit. And what God alone can give. Grace is what all need.

What none can merit. And what God alone can give. And so Paul spells out. The whole sweep of the gospel. In these few verses. We were dead.

In sin. Separated from God. But God has done something. And that something. Is Christ giving his life for us. On the cross. And this God.

Who is rich in mercy. Great in love. Bestows upon us. The incomparable riches. Of his grace. So we were sinners. But God has done something about that.

[24 : 28] And that is grace. The cross is all about a favor. Being granted. By a superior. To an inferior.

Grace is about God. Who is perfect. Doing something for sinners. Who are far from perfect. Grace is about taking sinners.

Grace is about taking sinners. And making them saints. Taking rebels. And making them children. And so it's no surprise.

At the heart of the Reformation. Was this great cry. Sola gratia. Grace alone. Let's pray. Father God.

We thank you. That when we were. Separated from you. Because of sin. You did something. You acted in grace. And you sent your son.

[25 : 30] Into the world. To be our saviour. In grace. He left the glory of heaven. To become. As we are. In grace.

He went to the cross. Taking to himself. Our sin. And paying the price of it. And so we thank you. For your grace.

Which brings to us. Forgiveness. But not only that. Confers upon us. The righteousness of Christ. And not only that. Adoption. Into your family.

Help us we pray. To appreciate more fully. The wonder. And the benefits. Of your grace.
In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Well we.