

Grace That Abounds

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[0:00] Let us pray. For whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

! O Lord, we ask you to instruct us from these Old Testament texts that we're about to study this morning. Encourage our hearts and minds. Make us steadfast in endurance.

And give us hope in your promises, fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray these things in his name. Amen. So, if you were here last week, and if you're not, you can go to our website and listen to the sermon.

We were in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1 to 9. We looked at God's gracious call to Abraham. We looked, we saw the story about God by grace rescued a man from idolatry.

He made a binding promise to him, to be the father of nations. And that through him, to bless the whole world.

[1:21] Today, we're going to be in Exodus chapter 19. It's on page 71 of your pew Bible, by the way. I encourage you to follow along. So, we're going to be in Exodus 19, and today we will be fast-forwarding hundreds of years after Abraham.

We're going to be looking at his descendants. Abraham is long dead, but God is still at work, bringing his promise to completion. So, between Genesis 12 and Exodus 19, Abraham's descendants had grown from a family.

Really, it had gone from a fatherless, a childless man to a family. Numerous. And then they went into Egypt. And in Egypt, they've become a nation.

And after 400 plus years of slavery in Egypt, God had rescued them by his mighty hand. He brought this nation of about 600,000 men.

That's not counting women and children. He brought them out of bondage and slavery. And he's taking them to the land he had promised to their forefathers long ago.

[2:33] And as we look at this passage, I want us to continue to see God's grace in his dealings with his people. With those whom he calls.

It is especially important that we see God's grace clearly at work in this passage. And we ought not to make the mistake of separating God's law from his grace.

That's going to be important as we move forward. In Exodus, the verse 1 to 2, we saw the arrival at Sinai. Now, it's been three months after that great rescue in Egypt.

God had delivered them. So three months after that great deliverance, Moses, God's servants, God's mouthpiece, had brought God's people to the foot of this mountain called Sinai.

By the way, this is the same mountain of the burning bush where God had called him prior to this time and asked him and tasked him with going into Egypt to deliver his people.

[3:41] And God had said to him then in Exodus 3.12, when he called him, God had promised Moses, when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain. So this is a fulfillment of God's promise even to Moses.

The same place where he called him to go, he now brings the people to whom God has sent him to rescue. He brings them to this mountain of the Lord. This was the sign that God gave him.

And now the sign is fulfilled. And as they come, as they've come to the foot of this mountain, as God had promised, this is not just a pit stop that they're making.

God has brought them here to cut a covenant with them. And a covenant is a formal binding agreement between at least two parties.

And in the ancient Near East, such covenants are often made between a superior king and his vassals. Oftentimes a conquering king will make a covenant with the kingdoms and the people he's covered.

[4:49] And it's usually conditional on each part, each side doing their part. For example, in the ancient Near East, the great king will say, I've conquered you. He wouldn't use the word conquer. He will say, I've liberated you.

And now what you have to do is obey me, observe my laws, pay my taxes. And if you do that, I will protect you. And they will then make a covenant that we will do as you say.

The great king will say, I will do as I promised. And there will be stipulations. If you break this commandment, if you break this agreement, this is what will be done to you.

Well, I want us to say that that's really what God is initiating here with Israel, his people. But unlike what is coming in the ancient Near East, what God is doing here, he's doing it after he has already saved and delivered and called the people to himself.

He's already made them his people. The law he's given and the stipulations are not conditional on them being his people. He's already made them his people by grace, by calling them to himself.

[5:55] So, observe the similarities and dissimilarities there. But before we even look at the consecration of these people by the covenant that God will make with them, let us remind ourselves of the God to whom they are entering into this relationship with.

This God is the one gracious and merciful Lord who out of love had called their forefather, Abraham. Isaac and Jacob.

And he had given them a promise to make their name great. We saw that last week. He had promised to bless them, to make them a blessing to the whole world.

And he had just delivered them from generational bondage in Egypt. And now he gathers them into this binding, loving agreement with himself.

Promising to continue to bless them, to be their God. And what is going on in these chapters of Exodus? I mean, rather, what's going on here in Exodus serves as an inch point for the rest of the Old Testament.

[7:02] This is the binding agreement that God makes with his nation, the nation of Israel. By which, they will live in blessedness in the land that he has promised them. We all know what happens.

But this is the reference point for the rest of the Old Testament. The rest of the Bible is the story of Israel's attempt, an ultimate failure, to keep their side of this covenant.

Until Jesus came, the true Israel. Until he stepped in and accomplished what they had failed to do. So we understand Jesus' earthly ministry and atoning death even through the lens of this covenant that's made here at Mansanai.

And so let's look in verse 3-6. Let's look at the requirements of the covenant. As they encamped before the mountain. We see there in the end of verse 2. Moses went up to God.

The Lord called him out of the mountain and saying to him, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel, You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

[8:20] Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples. For all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. That's what God says to his servant Moses. I want you to notice first, even in there, the first thing is the graciousness of God. God tells his servant Moses to remind the people of what? Of his gracious deliverance to them. To remind these people of how I defeated the Egyptians for them.

How I bore them up on eagles' wings and brought them to myself. What a powerful, powerful picture of God's graciousness.

In love, he sought them out. He finds them. He does the same to us. He finds us and rescues us and brings us to himself. Have you found this to be true of you?

[9:29] This grace that saves, that delivers, that plucks you out? Have you found it to be true? Is your testimony that God has delivered you from slavery and death and bring you into his everlasting abundant life?

I want you to know that even in the Old Testament, that life that God brings them into, that he invites them into, is not in the land.

The land is not the source of the life that God brings them into. It's not in the temple. It's not even in the law that he's about to give them. The life that he invites them into is in God himself.

And so the question then is, has God brought you to himself? If so, if that is true of you, you are a recipient of grace.

You have undeserved favor. Undeserved. And if not, that grace is available for you today.

[10 : 39] if you would but turn to Jesus, accept him as your Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. Now, if you're coming to church, your participation in the life of the church here at Holy Trinity does not lead you to the Lord.

And, I mean, if your participation in the life and fellowship does not lead you to the Lord himself, might I suggest to you that maybe you've not actually, truly found this grace that we're speaking of. Because it's not the doings that gives you life. It's not faithful attendants that gives you life. I want you to be faithfully attending church.

Come to church every Sunday. Come to the Bible studies. But do not put your trust or hope in that. That's not the source of life. And if you think that it is, you are in a risky place.

Because you are like unfaithful Israel. Who thinks the land and the temple will offer them safety? Not knowing that true blessedness, true life comes from being in the Lord.

[11 : 54] Relationship with Him. And that's what God calls Israel to hear. He says, I have brought you to myself. And we said this last week and I want you to keep it in mind again now.

All of God's promises originates from His grace. It is an outgrowth of His loving grace that He makes the promise that He makes.

What we have in Exodus is a progressive unfolding of the same grace God gave to Abraham when He called him. God in kindness advances the promise He made to Abraham.

Now He advances it to Abraham's descendants. He says, You yourselves remember what I did to the Egyptians. How I bore you up on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

Even before God gives them the law, He reminds them of the basis upon which He's relating to them. I am the Lord who sent plagues upon Egypt until they lifted their foot from off your necks.

[12 : 58] I am the Lord who rescued you at the Red Sea when you were surrounded on all sides. I am the Lord that have swooped down and lifted you up on my wings to safety.

And your ultimate destination, God is trying to tell Israel, your ultimate destination is not Canaan. It's not the physical land. Although it may be flung with milk and honey, that's not the ultimate destination.

The place I'm ultimately taking you to, inviting you into, is myself. I am your ultimate destination. I am your ultimate resting place, God is telling Israel.

And I am at work, God is telling Israel. I am at work reversing the curse, the curse that started in the garden. I am at work reversing that curse through you, by my gracious relationship with you.

What makes the land a place of promise, a place of blessedness, is God's presence in it. And that's what God is trying to establish here from the start with these people as he calls them, institutes them as a nation.

[14 : 16] And now God tells them, he gives them the terms of the covenant in response to his grace. He says to them, now therefore in verse 5, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

God says to Moses, these are the words I want you to say to them. The earth is mine, the nations, all of them are mine, but out of all of them, I have chosen you by grace to be my treasured possession.

Now to be God's treasured possession is to be afforded the greatest of all privileges. Now the word there, treasured possession, is the same word that is used later, when it's later used in the Old Testament, refers to the king's private treasure chest.

So for example in 1 Chronicles 29, David says he gives his own private treasure chest, the word treasured possession, he gives it for the building of the temple.

It is his own private precious treasure chest. God is saying that's what you are to me. Do you know that what God says of Israelites here, in Exodus, he says it of you, as you got it here this morning at Holy Trinity.

[15 : 49] You, like them, are the redeemed of the Lord. And that is how God looks on his people, those whom he has called. And how do you know that you are redeemed?

Has God rescued you from your enemies? And I don't mean your annoying co-worker or neighbor? That's not the enemy that I refer to.

That's your mission field. Those are your mission fields. That's what we read in the gospel reading this morning. That's what we should pray. Those are the ones you should go out with the gospel to. Those are not your enemies. I'm talking about your true enemies. The devil, Satan, sin, and death. Has God rescued you from that?

Have you known his forgiveness? Has he brought you into relationship? A fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

[16 : 54] Has God made a binding promise to bring you to his eternal rest? If he has done that, if you know, if you are in Christ, by the way, if you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, surrender to him, trust in him, then he has done that.

He has rescued you. You are his treasured possession. You are the redeemed of the Lord. And if you are God's treasured possession, the language God uses to describe chosen Israel is the same language Peter now uses in the New Testament to describe you who are in Christ, Christians. I'm going to refer you to 1 Peter 2 9. This is what Peter says of Christians now. Notice the similarities. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

You are God's treasured possession. But we know, we know in verse 5 there is a stipulation here, right? if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, God says to Israel.

But we know that this stipulation, this law that God sets up, is not against grace. It's not as if God says, I am going to start being gracious to you, and I'm not going to give you the law, and the law is the means by which I'm going to bless you, and if you disobey the law, I am going to be crossed with you, I'm going to punish you, I'm going to destroy you.

[18 : 34] The Bible does make stipulations about the keeping of the law is the way in which they stay in God's blessedness. But the law is not opposed to grace.

The law was given because of God's grace. As their king, and as their Lord, and as their savior, God has invited them into the promise he's made for them.

And he says the way in which you abide and remain in this promise is by keeping the law. But we know they couldn't keep the law.

Unless you think you're better than them, you cannot keep the law. I cannot keep the law. There is only one true Israel. One covenant keeping Israel.

And that is Jesus Christ himself. He is the true Israel. He is the one who came down, kept the covenant law without blemish. And he as king and priest now goes up and offers himself on behalf of his people.

[19 : 42] That is us, by the way, who are in Christ, in faith. You are his people. He's offered himself on your behalf on the mount of Calvary. he's carried the penalty of your failure and my failure upon himself.

So that if you are in Christ, you are the ultimate inheritors of this grace of God declared on Mount Sinai to Israel. You are the ultimate inheritors of that promise of God.

Look at what the people did when Moses told them of the Lord's promise and the stipulation of the covenant. Moses comes down and calls the elders to himself.

In verse 8, all the people answered in response to what God has said through Moses. All of them answered together in one voice. All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.

And Moses goes back up and tells God that this is what the people have said. We know that the people didn't do all that the Lord God has said. But it's important to note.

[20 : 51] It's a mistake. This is a mistake we often make in the church. We think of the Old Testament people as living under a dispensation of law.

While we live under a dispensation of grace in the New Testament. But the reality is that God didn't stop being gracious to his people in the Old Testament either.

It is the same dispensation of grace that they lived under that we live under. The basis of God relating to humankind at any time. The basis of his relationship is always founded on grace.

But then how are we to understand the stipulation in this covenant that God makes? If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my commandment. How are we to understand that?

We are to see that the condition to obey God, to keep the law, the condition to obey God and keep the law is not, it's not the condition, rather, it's not the means by which you are saved.

[22:02] Your law keeping does not save you. Your faithfulness to the law does not save you. And that's good news, isn't it, brothers and sisters? Because we know, we have not and we cannot keep the law perfectly.

rather than what is the law then to us? The law of God is the way by which God calls those whom he has already rescued to himself.

This is the means by which God calls you to himself and shows you what it is like to be like him, to live in his blessedness, to live according to his way, to be like him.

This is the point that God is making to Israel. He's made them a nation of priests set you apart from the world around you. He's done that to you too, the new Israel, those who are in Christ. He's set you apart for himself.

And as he calls you to himself, he's given you his law. And by it, we know how to be like God, how to live like Christ, how to resemble him, how to walk ethically and graciously and uprightly before this gracious God who has come and covenanted himself with us.

[23:08] This is why the psalmist can say in Psalm 19 about the law of God, that it is perfect. Go read Psalm 19 when you get home and look at how the psalmist talks about the law and the beauty of it.

And God calls you, when he calls you, he calls you to respond to his covenant. But how do we respond? I want to invite you to respond in faith. That is the only way we can respond to God's law and to God's covenant.

We cannot respond by saying, well, I just have to put up my bootstraps, tighten my seat of my belt and get to work. Obeying and keeping the law.

I can do it. No. You respond as the people of God by faith in the promises that God has made. Look just for a second at the Old Testament saints.

Were they faithful? We talked last week of Abraham, didn't we? God called him by grace to the land of promise. Abraham failed grievously in many instances.

[24:14] There was a time when he twice tried to pawn his wife off as a sister. He relented and doubted God's promises and he tried to make a way by which God will accomplish his promise.

He and Sarah did that with Agar and Ishmael. But God persisted in being faithful to Abraham. The same with Isaac, the same with Jacob, and the same with Israel.

The covenant that God makes here to us is not based on our ability to keep it. It is ultimately in our faith in him who was promised to keep his side of the covenant.

And as he kept it, he has kept it. We see it supremely in Jesus Christ. This Lord, who made a covenant with Israel, now comes and descends to be one with his people.

Lived perfectly a life that we could not live. Perfectly before God. Obeyed God's love perfectly. And he now produces by his grace, generates faith in us to know him, to believe him, to trust him.

[25:31] And that's our response. Continually, faith in response to that promise and grace he's shown. And this grace now that he's poured out upon us produces obedience to God.

And so when you hear the stipulation of God and the command to obey, Jesus says it himself, right? The means by which you show that you love me is by obedience to my word. But when you hear that, I want you to respond in faith.

It is grace that produces obedience to God in you, brothers and sisters. And your obedience then is an outgrowth of love to this gracious God who calls you.

And under the new covenant that Jesus, the greater Moses, has accomplished and initiated, you have the means by which you can have relationship with God in a more intimate, more beautiful way than ancient Israel had.

You have the Holy Spirit poured out upon you. You have the Holy Spirit that enables you to live, that convicts you of sin, that helps you to follow Jesus.

[26:45] You have the Holy Spirit that helps you to come to Him when you do fall and stumble in repentance. sins. You have the promises of God.

And so the response is faith. The response is not legalism. That's what oftentimes when we don't have faith, when we don't respond in faith, oftentimes it's the church that's often what we do instead.

We respond in legalism. And legalism looks like this. It's like, okay, I'm going to erect rules to jump over in order to live this life of relationship with God.

A set of rules that I have to keep. I'm going to make sure that I dot my I's and cross my T's. In legalism, there is no grace and there is no faith in the one who makes the promise. You're then putting your trust and faith in yourself rather than the God who has promised himself to you. But rather, I want to invite you to look at this God who has brought you to himself in Jesus Christ.

[28:00] And think of the writer of Hebrew as he says it, we need not cower under the foot of the mountain of the Lord in fear as they did in Exodus. Because through Christ we have come to Monzion, to the city of the living God.

Whereas in the Old Testament, the picture is the picture of gloom and doom and fear and foreboding at Mount Sinai. Now on Monzion, we've come with joy and celebration to this mountain because we know that Christ himself has fulfilled the requirements of the law at Calvary.

You have come to Jesus. You have come to Jesus, the mediator of the new and better covenant. So, brothers and sisters, remain in him.

See to it that you do not refuse his voice when he speaks in his word. This is why Paul writes in Romans 5, since we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him, you've obtained access by faith into this grace in which you stand. And you now rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

[29:35] God. And not only that, we even rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This, this is who we are, who are the people of God. You've come to Jesus. Remain in him.

Let us pray. Lord, help us as your church to trust you. Help us that our confidence will not be put in our works of righteousness, but our confidence will be in your perfect righteousness and in your promises to us.

And as we trust in you, Lord, draw us closer, we pray, that our life together will so pitifully speak of your goodness and grace to the watching world around us, that our life together will speak to the world around us of your magnificent love and abundant grace that has been shed abroad upon us.

[30:59] in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.