

The Grace of God

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[0 : 0 0] read there in the passage. We're going to consider three aspects of that grace that we've read. The blessings of God's grace that we see certainly in the opening verses that we've read, even though the word itself, grace, isn't included, we see the aspects of God's grace that we're going to consider more of when we think of the blessings that God gives to those who are his. And then as Paul goes on in the passage to use the word grace and emphasize God's grace, he speaks of two aspects of that grace. He speaks of glorious grace. We'll examine that in more detail, of course. Then he speaks of the riches of God's grace, the bounteous riches that God gives to his people through grace. Well, as I said last Lord's Day evening, in our second service of the day, we looked at the amazing love of God. We learned and we read in

Jeremiah that great truth of God to his people. I have loved you with an everlasting love. And, you know, we really, we truly marveled at the truth that we read there in the Old Testament scriptures. And as we highlighted that truth of God's everlasting love, we turned to the passage that we just read in Ephesians 1, that passage that highlights, that, if you like, echoes the love of God, the eternal love of God towards his people. God choosing his own people before the foundation of the world that we read there in verse 4 of Ephesians 1. And I think it's good for us if we keep to this passage, keep to Ephesians 1 or this first part of Ephesians 1, as we delve more into the wonders or the marvels that this chapter brings and teaches us of the God of grace. The God who is gracious towards his people is we see the grace of God towards sinners. It's that grace that we hear so often spoken of, even in our records, our, what's called the monthly record, this article that's in the record, the so-called poetry page. If you read that, it's a poem written by a lady called Anne Locke from the mid-16th century, and she writes of grace.

She craves to know the sense of God's grace in her life as she comes before God in repentance of sin. And she speaks of having senseless grace. She doesn't sense the grace of God in her life.

And so, you know, even through the ages, grace has been so much a part of a Christian's experience, a Christian's vocabulary. And we're going to consider grace again this evening. Because of all the great theological truths that we know of and can relate to in Scripture, the word grace just stands out. It's not just the word grace. It's the meaning of the word grace.

And it's not just the meaning of the word grace. It's the divine source of that word. And it's the application of grace and the joy and the actions of God that God gives in grace to his people, to everyone who knows him, who trusts in him, to everyone who knows the grace of God in his or her life.

[3 : 5 0] And the more that we dwell on this wonderful truth, this amazing truth of grace, the more I pray you'll want to worship God, the more you'll want to serve God, the more you'll want to obey him, the more you'll want to live a life of thanksgiving to God for his grace towards you. And of course, first of all, we need to define what exactly grace is in the context that we see it here. I remember, I'm going back decades, I remember the late Professor Collins of the then Free Church College. He was Professor of Church History at the Free Church College. And I remember Professor Collins saying this of grace.

Grace is that which God gives to us, which we don't deserve. And then he said mercy is that which God keeps from us, that we do deserve. Grace is that which God gives to us, that we don't deserve. And mercy is that which God keeps from us, that we do deserve. And well, that definition I heard certainly more than 40 years ago, and it certainly stayed with me to this day, and I'm sure many others who have heard Professor Collins give these words. But I think we would have to agree that we can even have a more refined definition of what grace is. It was the late Jim Packer who wrote that wonderful book, *Knowing God*. And just to say, if you haven't yet read *Knowing God*, get it, read it. It's, I think, one of the best summaries of the whole doctrine of God. But anyway, in that book, Jim Packer defines grace, and particularly with an emphasis in God's love. He writes this, the grace of God is love freely given towards guilty sinners. The grace of God is love freely given towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit, and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It's God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity. And I've no reason to expect anything but severity. And if you go to commentaries, if you go to systematic theology textbooks, of course you'll find definitions of grace there. But the basic essentials of that great work of God towards his people in grace, well, it's really summed up in what we've seen so far. The love of God,

God, to undeserving sinners. And that love given freely. That grace is a quality of God that impacts undeserving sinners and changes the lives of undeserving sinners forever. And so with that, we might call that that working definition of grace, the grace of God. Then, well, we can look more closely then at what the apostle's saying, what he's rejoicing in when he speaks of the grace of God that saves and keeps saving. Because it's that grace that Paul knew in his life. It's that grace that all who are in Christ know of and rejoice in.

Before we even look further at the passage that we read, just pause. Just reflect and hope what we've learned so far of grace. And just dwell in your heart that what we've seen so far points us to God, points you to eternal God. The one who in love has freely given you who are his, has freely given to you what you don't deserve because of your sin. And remember too, it's that grace that that that draws you to God, draws you to the God of all grace. The God whom we're worshiping right now. That grace that enables you to see God and to know God, to know how great God is, to know his love towards you, towards sinners. It's that grace that the apostle Paul knew in his life after he was converted. Even that grace that he was writing of here to the church in Ephesus, even as he's writing these words to you and to me to to rejoice in the grace that, well, is utterly undeserved and yet fully and freely given and given in Christ. So let's turn then to the blessing of grace or the blessings of grace.

And certainly, Paul doesn't specifically mention the word grace actually until verse six of this chapter. But as he begins to outline the wonders of God's saving grace towards his people, well, grace is in every part of his opening statements. These opening lines of his letter, certainly from from verse three to verse six, Paul, we might say, Paul gives a wonderful statement, a wonderful condensing summary of of the grace of God the Father, God the Father in salvation. Now, if we were to read on later, certainly up to verse 12, from verse seven to verse 12, Paul's going to describe the work of grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in relation to salvation. And in fact, from verse 13 and 14, Paul summarizes the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to to grace. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, one Lord, one source of grace that, well, we might say extends beyond the Trinity to sinner man. And it's that amazing grace that really Paul begins to express in words of thanksgiving and words of praise. Blessed be the, listen to the number of times he mentions the word bless here. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

[10 : 07] Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. Here's grace, here's grace in a nutshell. Paul is blessing God for God's grace and that grace and blessing his people, blessing his people with spiritual blessings. So let's just look at these words in order. You know, the first use of the word bless here. Our blessing God. Well, in other words, that's the response of the human heart that really praises God, that recognizes greatness in God, eternal greatness in the one true God. That blessing God that, well, that recognizes that God is worthy, he's worthy of all praise. And if he's worthy of all praise, well, he's worthy of praise for the blessing, for the blessings that he shows his people, to all who are his blessings that, of course, we could refer to us as acts of grace, grace or acts of grace that are sourced in heaven itself. It's the blessings that you and I receive from God, just as Paul spells out these blessings in a magnitude and a scale that really goes way beyond anything that we could possibly conceive of in life.

Paul stipulates what these blessings are, the blessings of electing grace. That's what Paul begins with in relation to in relation to God's grace, the blessings, the blessing of God choosing. The Father choosing those who are his, and the Father doing so from all eternity. And that choosing done, as Paul says, in the realms of heaven itself, before anyone was born, before you and I were born, before the world was created. The action of saving grace, electing grace that, well, that enables a person, as Paul says, enables a person to be holy and blameless before God.

It's that blessing that every person who's in Christ knows, knows because of that saving grace, that electing grace, that grace that enables a person to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, just try to absorb that truth, this truth that speaks of the grace of God towards God's undeserving sinners. The words that Paul uses here, that we should be holy and blameless before him. Look at the word he uses here, the personal pronoun, we, undeserving we, that we should be holy and blameless. We, you know, we who are anything but holy, anything but holy because of our sinful natures.

We, we who are anything but blameless because of our sins. Yet because of the grace of God and salvation. That's what we are. We are in Christ, holy and blameless. And you might say, well, how can this be that undeserving sinners such as ourselves can be holy and blameless? Of course, it's through the blessing of grace. God's love freely given to undeserving sinners through the merits of Christ Jesus.

[13 : 52] Because as God's word informs us, as we know by faith, we know in love that when our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior, our Savior.

Our sins were credited to him. But in return, his righteousness credited to us. We, in Christ, are reckoned righteous in God's sight.

Because of Christ's righteousness being reckoned to us. This most amazing truth. all through the unmerited grace of God planned from all eternity, planned in heaven itself, in the heavenly places.

This, of course, we know is deep truth. It is truth that we truly, truly do have to absorb in our hearts and minds really to grasp the grace of God, that grace that we know from the God of all grace.

And don't just absorb that, but respond to it. Don't just take it in faith, but respond with thanksgiving to God for his blessing to you and his saving grace.

[15 : 04] Paul's saying that, well, blessing God is the only response, the only right response to God for his blessing us is to bless God, to praise God, to praise him for his provision of grace.

Because that saving grace made possible by the merit, by the worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That saving grace, as we said, that saving grace, seen in electing grace.

And that made possible because of the grace of the Lord Jesus in saving his own by his meritorious work on the cross. Yes, as we said, this is truth.

This is deep truth. This truth that really brings you to respond and praise. None of us can remain neutral to this grace.

But ask yourself, as I ask myself, when was the last time you blessed God for his blessing of grace? When was the last time you truly in your heart praised him, give him thanks from the heart for his saving grace towards you who are in him?

[16 : 18] When was the last time you praised him for every spiritual blessing that you know and you know has come from heaven to earth? Because, you know, we can be so caught up with, well, yes, earthly benefits, but at the same time fail to give praise and thanks to God for the spiritual blessings that you know that have come from the Father, from God the Father in love towards you.

You know, you who know the blessing of heaven, you have something so precious, so eternal. You have something that's never going to fade away. You've got God's blessing from heaven that's going to ensure that, well, that you know something and you have something that the world knows nothing of.

You have spiritual blessings and these blessings that you know of now on earth and you know are eternal. But let me just say this to any of you listening in or watching on, for you, for whom all that we've said so far really means nothing to you.

You know in your heart the fact that you don't know the blessings of God in saving grace. Well, don't despair. If you know there's that emptiness in your heart that only Jesus can fill and you know that that emptiness can only be filled by the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God, well, come to him now.

Come to him now. Because he's waiting to bless you. He's waiting to lavish his gifts of grace upon you. He's not going to turn you away when you cry unto him for his grace and mercy.

[18 : 02] He's not going to push you away. Come as you are. And in your emptiness, you'll fill that emptiness with the saving grace.

And then you'll know us, as Robert Murray McChain knew when he wrote these great words of praise to God for God's saving grace. And Murray McChain wrote these words, It's chosen not for good in me, wakened up from wrath to flee, hidden in the Saviour's side by the Spirit sanctified.

Teach me, Lord, on earth to show in my love, how much I love. And of course, we owe everything to the God of all grace. We owe everything to the one who blesses his people in grace.

the blessings of grace. But, of course, Paul isn't finished speaking about grace. He's not finished speaking about the blessings of grace as he continues even the remainder of verse 4 and into verses 5 and 6 where we see the glory of God's grace.

In love, Paul says, You know, you can just sense Paul as he's sitting in his little darkened room as he's writing these words.

[19 : 30] He's so full of joy as he's writing these words and maybe even at the same time struggling to put into words, struggling to speak of even the extent of the glory of the grace of God.

But under inspiration of God, God in his grace, God breathing out from heaven, God breathing out the words that we know and we can absorb, we can digest as Paul writes and tells of the further, if you like, blessings of grace, the blessings of God's grace, the blessing, as Paul says here, the blessings of predestination, the blessings of adoption, these great theological truths that tell of grace and the glory of grace.

I mean, glory, well, glory is a word we actually hear quite a lot of even in ordinary speech, ordinary writing. Even the past few weeks, as some of you, I'm sure, were watching the Olympics and the winning of the Olympic medals.

Well, the word glory was so often associated with these medal winners. But true glory, true glory isn't the kind of achievement that these Olympic medal winners know of that's so fleeting, so transient.

Because true glory, true glory, is found in the God of all glory. Glory that speaks of God's majesty. It's glory that speaks of God's power.

[21 : 03] It's glory that speaks of the God who's eternal and worthy of all praise. It's God who gives gifts to his people grace, grace and salvation. That tells of the glory of God and God's magnificent love towards his people and grace.

And so, Paul here, he's bringing out the glory of God in relation to grace. That's, if you like, in the mystery of predestination. That determining, God's determining beforehand all could be saved.

And God doing so, God doing this, something that's remarkable, as Paul goes on to say, when Paul speaks of God's adopting those whom he chose, God's adopting those whom he chose and brought into his family.

And in speaking of the truth of the truth of predestination and adoption, Paul cites the grace of God in these wonderful truths.

Because it was God's free, undeserved grace that chose sinners, that saved sinners, God doing so through God's electing love.

[22 : 18] God predestining those who are his and God adopting those who are his, you who are his to be counted as his own. Because it's that grace, that saving grace that tells, that speaks of the glory of God.

This tells us then that God's grace is glorious. That grace itself is worthy to be admired. Because that grace comes from the God of all glory.

It comes from our glorious God. It tells us that his grace is sufficient for us. It's sufficient in saving you. It's sufficient in giving you new life.

It's sufficient in doing what by yourself you couldn't do. And so Paul's indicating here that, well, the love of God and adopting sinners into God's family and that act is worthy of praise.

well, it's the same way that you have to respond to the grace of God. Praise him. Praise him for his glorious grace. Praise the God of all grace, the God who is glorious.

[23 : 29] Praise him for that glorious grace. And even now, even now in the quiet of your hearts, yes, offer up to God, even a silent prayer of thanks.

Offer up to him that prayer of praise and thanksgiving for that glorious grace, for the blessing of grace, for the glorious grace that saves you, that saved you, that saved those, even you, who are his, the glory, the glory of God's grace.

Then finally, as we're ending the passage, the riches of God's grace. In fact, even the remainder of the passage that we read from verse 7 to verse 10.

I'll just read verse 7 again. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of God's grace.

You can read on yourself the remainder of that passage of that section. I mean, verses 7 to 10, I mean, in many ways these verses are a sermon in themselves.

[24 : 40] Let's just focus really on the emphasis of grace that, well, certainly that we find in this many-worded section, this many-worded, even this long sentence, because these words that Paul writes here, well, they point again to the God of all grace, and this time emphasizing the riches of God's grace, the riches of God's grace.

riches. You know, when you think of riches in everyday life, you think, very often think of things like superabundant wealth. You know, when we're thinking of riches, we think of big numbers, multiple numbers, numbers maybe in monetary value, maybe numbers in terms of possessions, things that have value, things, if you like, that go beyond the ordinary measure of life.

wealth. And also, I suppose, when we think of riches, certainly we might say honestly gain riches, you think of things that reflect that a heavy price has been paid for these riches.

Even the price of hard work, or the price of real effort, or even the skill in financial dealings. And we might even think, when we think of riches, we think of generosity, generosity of those who have riches, and giving of the riches even to help others in need.

Well, how much more than the riches of God's grace, these riches gifted to sinners, sinners who deserve nothing of that grace.

[26 : 19] You see, the grace of God is wealth, but it's a wealth of a very different sort to the wealth that we can possess on earth, because the riches of God's grace is wealth, wealth that goes way beyond the ordinary measure of life.

You know, even the richest people on earth, names that we almost trip off the tongue, I suppose, the billionaires who are without Christ, they're in far greater poverty compared to the wealth that the believer has in Christ, because it's that wealth that all spills out here.

That wealth that he tells us in these verses that speak of redemption, redemption through the blood of Christ, that blood that's the currency, that's the currency of the riches of God's grace, the blood of Christ, that's the currency of rich grace, because as Paul goes on to say in this little section, he speaks of the riches of God's grace in terms of what that currency purchases for us, forgiveness of our sins.

And it's that grace that's, as Paul says, lavish, that grace is a rich word in itself, that grace that God gives in abundance, gives to undeserving sinners who deserve nothing, deserve no forgiveness for our sins, and yet we know the will of God for our salvation.

that grace, that grace that's abundantly given, and given freely, so that you're united in Christ, something that certainly no riches on earth can purchase for us.

[28 : 05] See, the riches of God's grace are truly lavished in God's people, and it's really this language that Paul's using here, it's telling of God's generosity and giving grace to his people.

it's the riches of God's grace really, well, it tells us of the cost that was paid for our salvation. As we said, the currency, the currency being the blood of the Lord Jesus, that blood that Jesus shed on the cross, because when we were in absolute need of salvation, Christ came and he purchased salvation, he purchased it with his life.

So we've been hearing this evening and hearing the word of God that tells us of the blessing of grace, of glorious grace, of the riches of grace.

How do you respond? Well, surely in praise, and even from the heart, declaring what I've gone, what I've gone to show his people with such lavish blessings, such privileges, for a father to show grace to his children, what a saviour to give life to those who are his in the purchase of salvation, in the grace of his giving, so that you might know the saving grace of God.

So where's your heart tonight? Is it with the riches of the world, or is it with the riches of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus? And I pray then that you'll know where true riches lie, and that you'll know the riches of God's grace.

[29 : 52] Yes, even in your life today, and always, and onwards, as you know that grace, the grace of God, given through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, and let us pray.

Our heavenly Father, you, who are the God of all grace, you, who have showered your people with grace upon grace, we give you praise, we give you thanks, that that grace is eternal, that your people will never, as it were, run out of that grace, that that grace is ours eternally, even given in the eternity of heaven itself.

And so, Lord, we give you thanks and praise for that glorious grace, give you thanks and praise for the riches of that grace. Lord, we thank you, and we ask, Lord, that we will truly live by that grace all our lives.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.