

# Grace Abounding to the Glory of Jesus

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Date: 29 September 2024

Preacher: Rev Gordon Matheson

[ 0 : 01 ] We're going to begin our worship this morning, and we're going to sing to God's praise in Psalm 100. This is in the Scottish Psalter, page 362.

We'll sing to the tune, the Old 100th. This is the first version, the long meter version. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice.

Let's worship God. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Then serve with earth his praise for tell, come ye before him and rejoice.

All that the Lord is God indeed. We are his love, he does not speak.

[ 1 : 40 ] And for his sheep he doth stay. All the Lord.

All enter in his gates with base, approach resg shock his corpse and too.

Praise God and bless His name always, for it is simply so to do.

For while the Lord our God is true, His mercy is forever sure, His truth that all times serve me soon, and shall promise to each end you.

Let's call on God's name in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we have today every possible reason to come and to sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

[ 3 : 28 ] We seek today to adore and glorify You for Your mercy and Your goodness and Your abundant grace towards us.

We see it, Lord, in the world that You have created, ample provision being made for us, Your creatures, enabling us to live and breathe day by day, to pursue great and wonderful things in our lives, the greatest of which is Your worship, magnifying Your holy name.

And so today we would seek to glorify You as You deserve. As we give You the praise of our lips, may we also worship with our hearts and with our minds engaged in what we are doing.

We pray that You would free us today from any semblance or appearance of merely going through the motions of Christian worship, but that today we would worship You in spirit and in truth.

As we say, that our hearts would be engaged with true devotion, our minds engaged with a desire to understand and know the God whom we worship and love.

[ 4 : 46 ] We ask today, Father, that You would forgive us for our sins. We come before You confessing that our sins are many, and yet we know we have an abundant grace in God. And so today I pray, Father, especially for anyone here who is in the midst of great despair, who thinks that perhaps their sins are too much, who perhaps today imagines that there is no way back for them.

May You today speak into each one of our hearts and lives, assuring us of the great forgiveness that is available through Jesus Christ and helping us to know Him in the abundance of His grace towards us.

And so bless us in our time of worship today. Receive our thanks as we meet with You and free us from all external concerns that would distract us from the truth of God.

Bless us this day, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, boys and girls, this morning, I have brought with me another item from our house, which at times looks like a building site, because we're in the middle of doing up our house just now.

And one of the things that we are doing is painting, and painting means you have to make choices. So when you're deciding what color you want the walls of your house to be, like your bedroom walls or your living room walls or your kitchen walls or the walls in the hall or the walls in the toilet, all of them need to have paint on them, what you get are these things.

[ 6 : 23 ] I don't know if you've seen them before. This is a little test. It's called a tester roller. I have to be careful because Roddy won't be happy with me if I spill paint all over the pulpit today.

So I have to be careful. But this is a paint tester, and what you do is you squeeze it, and some paint comes out of the thing down here, and then it goes on to the roller, and then you roll your little bit of paint on the wall of your room.

And you can get maybe five or six of these that are different colors, and you'll decide and you'll say, that's the color that we want for this room. But when you look at it, it's a tiny little brush, and if you were going to paint your whole room with a brush like this, it would take forever, because this little brush only does about that much space.

You can just imagine if your whole wall is like a whole room, it would take forever to paint with one of these. So you need to get a bigger brush with the real paint. But this means you can just do a little tester patch, and you can see what it's like. So they're a wonderful little thing.

And that got me thinking a little bit this morning about paint, because what we do with paint is we cover up what's there before. So when you go into one of the rooms in our house, it's one of the front bedrooms in the house downstairs, and for some reason, the original paint is still on that wall.

[ 7 : 43 ] It was underneath all the wallpaper. So when we stripped all the wallpaper off, we found the original paint still there, and that original paint is the brightest lime green you can ever imagine.

And it's going to take a lot of coats to cover up the bright lime green paint that's on this wall. And it got me thinking a little bit, because a lot of the time in our lives, that's what we kind of do.

We say to ourselves, I'm just going to be good enough to cover up all of the lime green sins, and all of the lime green terrible bad things that I do, all of the times that I'm disobedient to my mom or dad, all of the times that I'm angry in school, all of the times that I shout at my brother or my sister unfairly, all of the bad things that we do, we think to ourselves, I can just cover them up, and I'll be okay.

If I can just cover up all the bad things enough, then everything will be all right. And so we think to ourselves, if I'm just good enough, all the bad things will be covered up.

And it's like trying to say to ourselves, if only I had enough paint to cover up the lime green, and I'll just do lots and lots of good things, and then when God looks at me, he won't see the bad things.

[ 9 : 21 ] We say to ourselves, God will see the good things that I've done. And that's what we do in our lives. We try and cover up all of the bad, naughty things that we do, but it doesn't change the fact that underneath, our hearts are like the walls in that bedroom in our house.

You can cover them with as much paint as you like, but the lime green is still going to be there. And I think that's one of the most important lessons we can learn.

And we can try as hard as we like to cover up all of the bad things that we've done, but what we really need is for something really special to happen.

And that is for God to come in and change what's there. And so what God does when we come to believe in Jesus, when we come to Christ, and we put our faith in him, when we trust in Jesus to save us, and one of the things that God does is he covers us with Jesus.

And that's because when Jesus comes, he doesn't just change what's on the outside in our lives, he changes the inside as well. Transforms that lime green paint of our sinful lives and makes us totally good in God's eyes.

[ 10 : 58 ] So when God sees us, if we're believers, if we love Jesus, when God sees us, he doesn't see the lime green paint at all. Even when he looks inside, he doesn't see the old person.

He sees someone as perfect as his son, Jesus Christ. And so what's so much better than having to change the, or rather paint over the paint that's there, to change the color of it on the outside, what we really need is someone who can change the inside, get rid of the original lime green entirely, and just make us perfect in God's sight.

And that's what we're going to think a wee bit about today in the sermon, about how God changes our hearts and perfectly converts us, transforms us, makes us completely different so that we can be seen like Jesus has seen.

Just perfect in God's eyes. Let's say the Lord's Prayer just now together. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

[ 12 : 24 ] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Amen.

We're going to sing again to God's praise in Psalm 32, this time in the Sing Psalms version, page 38. And this is a psalm that talks about how good it is to receive that forgiveness of our sins. And so we're going to sing from the beginning through to verse 7, how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sins, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is cancelled in God's grace.

There's no deceit in him. There's nothing flawed inside because God has changed his heart. So we're going to sing verses 1 to 7 to God's praise. How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sins.

Please stand if you're able. Because God has received forgiveness for his sins, whose sins are covered from those kings description, however, losing your sins and■■■■ shall be for God's work! [ 13 : 44 ] How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sins, who has performed for their sins, who has failed for his sins, whose sins are covered from those kings, whose sins are covered but their sins doGod's answer Whose debt is canceled, in rose-glaze, There's no deceit in air.

When I can silent all thy voice, With glory dwell for now.

In England I felt and dropped, Both day and night my strength was set, As in a summer's night.

Then I may bear my sin to you, The guilt that lived within.

I said, O Lord, I can't resist, And you forgive when I confess, You pardoned all my sin.

[ 15 : 34 ] So let the Godly pray to you, While you are to be found, Surely when waves are sweeping past, And mighty waters rising past, You keep them safe and sound.

You are my hiding place, O Lord, My true security.

You keep me safe and troubled days, You circle me with joyful praise, When you have set me free.

Please turn with me in your Bibles this morning, To read in Paul's letter to the Romans.

I think this will be around about page 1131 In the church Bible. Romans chapter 1.

[ 17 : 20 ] Romans chapter 1.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, Called to be an apostle, Set apart for the gospel of God, Which he promised beforehand through his prophets In the holy scriptures, Concerning his son, Who was descended from David according to the flesh, And was declared to be the son of God in power, According to the spirit of holiness, By his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, Through whom we have received grace and apostleship, To bring about the obedience of faith, For the sake of his name among all the nations, Including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all those in Rome who are loved by God, And called to be saints, Grace to you and peace, From God our Father, And the Lord Jesus Christ. Firstly, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, Because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

For God is my witness, Whom I serve with my spirit, In the gospel of his son, That without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, Asking that somehow by God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you, That I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, Both yours and mine.

[ 19 : 07 ] I want you to know, brothers, That I have often intended to come to you, But thus far have been prevented, In order that I may reap some harvest among you, As well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, Both to the wise and to the foolish. And so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also, Who are in Rome.

Amen. This is God's word to us. We will come back to this passage in just a little while. Let's bow our heads then once more in prayer to God.

Our God and our Father, We bow before you today. We seek to have the same spirit of rejoicing that Paul had, When he says that he has been set apart for the gospel.

Help us to know today that the wonder of what it means, To be in the very epicenter of your grace and purpose.

[ 20 : 18 ] You have ordained for us to be here today. You've made it possible for us to be here today. And in a world filled with strife, And in a world filled with distractions, And a world filled with busyness, Where so many things could easily intrude into our lives.

You've brought us to this point today, Where we're gathered for worship, Where we're gathered for fellowship to encourage one another. You've brought us to a place today where we can hear the

gospel.

You've brought us to a place where prayer is made. Where we can intercede for our community, For our families, for the town, for the island, our nation, and the whole world.

So help us, Lord, to see the enormous significance In what we are doing this morning. We're here because you care, Not only about us, But you care about the people, And the things that concern us.

You want us today to intercede for these people. You want your church on earth to be a praying church. A church that is concerned for the world around it.

[ 21 : 36 ] In order that we may be salt and light within it. And so help us today to know that because you have that concern, Help us therefore to pray with boldness and confidence.

That when we pray for your blessing in the lives, Not only of this congregation, But in the lives of our town, our families, our friendships, In the life of our nation, and to the ends of the earth.

Help us to know today that we are praying to a God Who has ordained that we should pray for these things today. And who is powerful to bring answers to the prayers of his people.

We want to pray today, Father, for this church. We want to pray for it in all of its particular needs, As a gathering of your people. And you know, Lord, the troubles and the sorrows that each one of us bear.

You know what we are carrying as we came to church today. You know what struggles we have already had this morning in order to get here. And we lift all of these things up before you today. And we pray, Father, that you would bless us.

[ 22 : 44 ] We know that so often our strength is insufficient for the things that we face. And so we pray that you would make us men and women who are dependent on an almighty God.

Help us to learn what it is to know that your strength is made perfect in our weakness. And to discover the sufficiency of your great grace. Lord, we want to pray today for particular needs that people may have.

We pray for the sick. For those who are struggling through various kinds of illness just now. And we ask that you would bring healing and help. We pray for those, Lord, who are struggling through the experience of old age.

And who know that perhaps difficult and increasingly difficult years may lie ahead. And we pray that you would give endurance in the face of suffering. In all of this, Lord, we ask and pray that you would give us a spirit of joy.

To know that our joy is not rooted in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. But our joy is rooted in the person who is with us. You've given us yourself.

[ 23 : 55 ] And so may we today find true joy in knowing your fellowship in all of our circumstances. Whether it's in time of plenty or in times of want.

Whether it's in times of health or in times of illness. Whether it's in times of joy or sorrow. May we know the presence of God.

And may we be encouraged and built up through that. May we pray, Father, for our town, for our community here on the island. We pray for an awareness of the gospel to grow in this place.

May men and women, boys and girls, come to know the great mercy that is available in Jesus.

There are so many people around us, Lord, today who are full of despair. People who do not know that salvation is even possible.

People who are limping through life. Because of the overwhelming burden of this broken reality in which we live. And we ask, Father, that you would bring into the experience of these people an abundance of mercy.

[ 25 : 02 ] We pray that you would do this by raising up people like us. People who will know the Lord. And who will therefore be bold to share the good news of Jesus with those around about us.

Give to us confidence, therefore, to talk of Christ in our lives day by day. Help us to live out the reality of salvation in Jesus. That we would be gracious in how we interact with others as well.

We pray for the great needs of our community at this time. Lord, we know there is so much uncertainty in people's lives. There is uncertainty around jobs and employment. We ask and pray, Father, that in all of this you would be gracious to us.

That you would provide for us. We pray, Father, for those who are working in particularly difficult sectors in our community. Those particularly who deal with substance abuse.

Those who are working with people struggling through alcoholism, drug addiction. Those who are working with young people whose lives are full of trouble. And we ask and pray, Lord, that you would be gracious and help those dealing with these particular societal ills.

[ 26 : 12 ] That you would give wisdom to them. We pray for our leaders. We pray for those elected to represent us in the council, in parliament. We ask and pray your blessing on them.

Give them wisdom for the decisions that have to be made. We know, Lord, there are always difficult choices to be made. And so we pray that you would give them boldness. As they would seek to stand up for the plight of our communities in particular.

Bless our nation. Bless us with wise leaders. Bless us with people who will help and do justice. People who will grant abundant mercy where it is needed.

People who will wield the sword of responsibility with clarity, with fairness. Help us with people who will not abuse the power that they have been given.

Help us to be a light of hope in a dark world. Help us to be a place where the way of God's pattern of justice is what informs and guides our politicians.

[ 27 : 24 ] So we want to pray today for those who are seeking to uphold the truth in our nation. We want to pray especially for organizations like CARE, the Christian Institute.

Others who would seek to promote a biblical worldview in our parliaments, in our society. May their voice be heard in the midst of such a clamor of opinion amongst our leaders.

So often, Lord, what happens in our nation, we know it's the result of choosing to pursue the wisdom of men. Whether it's focus groups or anything else.

And we pray, Father, that into this, the voice of righteousness and wisdom would be heard in the streets. We pray for our world, Lord, today. We know how dark a world it is.

We've seen it over recent weeks. With the increasing complexity and violence in the Middle East.

[ 28 : 32 ] We see it continuing in Ukraine and the war there on our borders in Europe. We see it, Father, in the conflicts that spread through parts of Africa and particularly in Sudan.

We ask and pray, Father, that in all of these places, that you would remember your people. That you would remember the witness of the saints. To be voices that long for peace and reconciliation. Lord, that's what we long for above all. We long simply for peace. But we know as we look at these situations that peace has to be matched with justice. And so we long for a day of Christ's power. When he comes, then there will be peace. When he comes, there will be justice. And so we pray, Father, that the appearing of Jesus would come.

As the book of Revelation closes, we pray, Father, even so, come, Lord Jesus. This world is so full of sorrow. That we echo the groaning of the world as it waits for the appearance of the saints.

[ 29 : 48 ] That we would see an end to the unimaginable suffering of millions upon millions of people. And so, Father, we long for a day of justice. A day of power.

And in the waiting, we long for grace. We long for grace to flow through the witness of the church. That into all of these places where there is real darkness because of violence and conflict.

We know as well there is a spiritual darkness that runs into the hearts of men and women and boys and girls. And as we long, Lord, for peace, for an end to these conflicts, may we long more for the appearance of salvation for these people.

The salvation for those on the battlefield. The salvation of those displaced refugees. The salvation of combatants. The salvation of bystanders. The salvation of all, Lord.

We long for the work of the gospel. To go forth unfettered in these places. And so, may you send forth and raise up workers for this vineyard.

[ 30 : 58 ] We long, Lord, for the appearance of the gospel. And may that be our heart's desire this day. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to sing again to God's praise in Psalm 63. This is in the Sing Psalms version again, page 80.

We're going to sing to the tune, Werum. Verses 4 to 8. Just three stanzas. I'll bless you, Lord, throughout my life. And raise my hands to you in prayer.

My joyful lips will sing your praise. My soul is fed with richest fear. Upon my bed I lie awake and in my thoughts remember you. I meditate throughout the night and keep your constant love in view. Because you are my help alone. In shadow of your wings I'll sing. You hold me up with your right hand. To you, O God, my soul will cling.

[ 32 : 10 ] Let's remember God's, the words of this psalm, God's constant love. The idea there in Hebrews is the same as the word we're going to be thinking about today. God's grace. It's that flowing, abundant, joyful mercy that God extends to us continually.

And so let's sing to his praise. I bless you, Lord, throughout my life. I bless you, Lord, throughout my life. I'll bless you, Lord, throughout my life. And raise my hands to you in prayer.

My joy, who lives, will sing your praise. My soul is fed with richest fear.

Upon my bed I lie awake and in my thoughts remember you.

I meditate throughout the night. And keep your constant love in view.

[ 33 : 43 ] If pause to lie, my help alone. In shadow of your wings I'll sing.

You hold me up with your right hand. To you, O God, my soul will cling.

And please turn with me in your Bibles back to Romans chapter 1. That's right.

And look at verse 5 of this chapter.

Through Jesus, Jesus Christ our Lord, through Jesus, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations.

[ 35 : 13 ] Including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. Let's just bow in prayer for a moment. Heavenly Father, as we take some time this morning to think about your abundant grace, help us to remember that as Paul writes in this verse, that includes us.

That this morning, your abundant grace extends to us. That this verse is for people like us who are going through all of the things that we are going through.

That you care about each one of us. That you care about each one of us. In that particular love with which you have for us. And so help us today, Father, to see that our receiving grace.

And our reflecting grace. Our giving grace. Our showing grace. Our grace is all part of your purpose for us. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I wonder just how casually we use the word grace or how we think about what grace is.

[ 36 : 43 ] I certainly think myself from my own youth. We would always say grace before a meal. We would give thanks to God and we would ask his blessing on the food that we were about to receive.

We think about grace in terms of the special privileges that belong to some people. That there is a way of referring to nobility as your grace.

Someone who has an elevated status. I mean, well, grace certainly belongs to people who are in a privileged position. But this passage today that we are looking at, this verse that we are thinking about today, is one where Paul is pretty clear.

Grace is not merely about what you say just before you eat your food. And grace is not something referred to specifically for a certain category of people.

He talks about having received grace in order to bring about this thing called the obedience of faith. So grace is for something. And that purpose extends to those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

[ 38 : 04 ] So everyone who belongs to Jesus today, and I would hope that's everyone here. That would be my desire. That all of us here today would belong to Jesus. That we've come to him in faith.

That for all of us, receiving this same grace that Paul is talking about is really important. And so I wanted today to think about grace.

The root word simply means in Greek, actually, the word means to rejoice. That's what the basic idea behind this word is.

A rejoicing taking place. A joyful experience that comes into someone's life. And so today, what we want to think about is how that experience of joy, where it comes from, what the origin of it is.

We want to think about what its nature is. What exactly is this thing called grace? What effect it has on our lives? What happens to us when we receive grace?

[ 39 : 07 ] And ultimately, what the goal and purpose of this grace really is. To begin with then, to think about the origin of grace. Paul writes here very clearly, tells us through Jesus, we have, he says, received grace.

We need to get the context in this letter right. This is just the beginning of this letter. It's a letter in which Paul talks about grace an awful lot, in fact.

And there's only, well not only, but it's one of the common words in the New Testament. It's used about a hundred times in the whole New Testament. A quarter of the uses of the word grace in the New Testament are here in the letter to the Romans. So grace is a central theme to this letter, as much as a theme to the New Testament and to the Bible.

Paul thinks it's really important. It's right here in the introduction to his letter. These Christians receive grace. And Paul's talked about his calling and his consecration. He's been set apart, he says, for the gospel of God.

For the good news about Jesus coming into the lives of men and women. He's been set apart for this proclamation of this good news, which is the gospel of God, which was promised beforehand, which God had effectively given a promise to right the way back in the very beginning.

[ 40 : 22 ] I was talking to the kids this morning about having a covering. The thought came to me, in fact, this morning, I was double checking it, but the word covering is there. Right in the very beginning of the story of humanity. After the fall, Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden of Eden.

They've tried to cover themselves with fig leaves, but God provides a covering for them. And so God in the gospel is providing a promise there that one day he would properly cover sin once and for all.

And that comes through Jesus. This grace that we think about today includes the work of Jesus coming to cover our sin.

And so today the offer is there to us right from the outset in this, that the person and the work of Jesus is for sinners.

That if today you are a sinner, if today you are someone whose life is mired in rebellion against God. And that's evidenced in lots of different ways.

[ 41 : 25 ] It's perhaps sometimes seen in the wickedness that we live in. But sometimes it's seen in the attempts at righteousness that we live in, where we try to cover our own sin.

Our own empty hearts are covered, we think, by our own righteousness, our own goodness. We have no interest in Christ himself for God. That rebellion against God, a covering for that is available today for us.

Because this gospel, this good news is about Jesus, God's Son, who was incarnated, came into the world as the Son of David, a descendant of David.

But who is proclaimed through his resurrection to be Christ, the Son of God. This Jesus has brought salvation for us. And Paul now says, abundant grace is given to us flowing through Jesus.

It's through Christ that we have received grace. It originates, this thing grace, this joy.

[ 42 : 34 ] It originates with God. Through joy in the experience of men and women who are fashioned in God's image.

True joy originates in our experience, not aside from God, but in fellowship with him. We know that in our experience anyway.

Our deepest joys are not something that we experience by ourselves. Our deepest joys are things that we experience in fellowship with others, in partnership with people.

The friendships that we have. The marriages that we have. The families that we have. The joy that we find in the joy of our parents over us throughout our lives.

The joy that we find in the closeness of working with people to shared goals. The joy that we find in partnerships, in the life of the church.

[ 43 : 36 ] All of these joys. We find joy in all of these different relationships. But at the core of all of this, for us as human beings, what we're created for is to experience joy.

To experience grace in relationship with God. And so for us to discover the greatest of all joy.

For us to discover this thing called grace. We need to discover Christ. We need to discover where God has come to us.

And where God has said, I will fix what is broken in the relationship between us. I will restore joy and harmony into the life of you and I.

And so today I wonder, just to begin with. Before we get into any more thought about the nature of grace and what happens. Or what's going on with it. And how it all works.

[ 44 : 39 ] I want to ask you very simply. Have you come to Christ? And some people have an outward form of Christianity. You come to church. Some people have the morality of Christianity somehow deep ingrained within them.

Their worldview is affected by the biblical teaching that they've received. That's all maybe good and I'm sure it's wonderful for society and for yourself. But do you know God? Do you know Jesus? Is Christ your friend today? Does knowing him bring you joy today? Secondly, I want to think about the nature of grace.

And it's interesting the way Paul talks about that here. He talks about having received not only grace through Jesus. We have received not only grace but also apostleship. And it's really important to come and to understand the nature of grace.

Looking at how these two ideas connect to one another. Grace and apostleship in this verse. Grace is not just an isolated thing. It's not just a sort of, it's not like you put, you know, salt onto your food to make it taste a little better.

[ 45 : 53 ] So the food's pretty good already and you add the salt and it makes the flavor just kind of pop. That's not what grace is. It's not something that you just add to make our lives a little bit better. It is essential, integral to our whole existence.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2, he says, By grace you have been saved through faith. Our whole salvation as Christians depends on this thing. It's all about this. There's no functional life as a Christian without the grace of God operating in us and for us.

And so grace is all that God has given us. All that God projects into our lives. All that God puts in there in order to transform us and renew us.

To make us into images of Christ. To make us look like Jesus. Because that's what actually is happening in our salvation.

Our salvation involves not merely a sort of slight improving of the person that we once were. But a radical transformation of what we are. So that we are no longer just aimless and purposeless and identity-less.

[ 47 : 13 ] Apart from ourselves. We are given a purpose. We are given a purpose. Because operating alongside grace, Paul says, is apostleship. And when Paul talks about apostleship, what he means is that setting a part of God with a purpose.

And that is what Christ came with. Christ came with. And Christ, remember, is not merely here in the world. He's sent into the world.

The Father sends the Son into the world. And then Jesus, when he's commissioning the apostles, he says to the disciples, As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. And so something about receiving grace is about a purpose being given to us.

The nature of it is a purpose-given thing. Grace gives us purpose. When Paul talks about grace in this letter, it's worth noting.

You can maybe do this this afternoon if you just get a concordance or one of your apps on your phone. You can search for the word grace in the letter to the Romans. You see there, Romans 12, for example, Paul writes, For by grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think with sober judgment and according to the measure of faith that God has given.

[ 48 : 34 ] So, by the grace given to me, I say to everyone. The nature of Paul's life is one that has been shaped by the coming of grace into him.

Paul's purpose is to share the call of the gospel. You see in Romans 12, verse 6, Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

So, if prophecy in proportion to our faith and so on. And again, if you go to Romans 12, Paul's whole point there is that all of us are given gifts in the life of the church, gifts that God gives us for ministry, for service.

And these gracious gifts that are given to us are to be used, to be exercised, to be lived out, in connection to our calling, in connection to the purpose which we have been given.

Romans 15, On some points I have written to you very boldly, by way of reminder, because of the grace given to me by God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, in the priestly service of the gospel of God.

[ 49 : 55 ] The nature of grace is that it is a sending work. God gives us, in giving us grace, God gives us purpose.

That's there throughout Romans. Whatever Paul talks about it, he's talking about the fact that grace is inseparable from the mission of God.

That grace, coming into our lives, that the work of the gospel, the Holy Spirit, applying into our lives the work of Jesus, is not given to us so that we can just sit there and say, well, isn't this lovely? It's given to us so that we can be bold in his service, and exercising all of the gifts that have been given to us.

And that ties in to the joyful heart of God himself. God today loves Stornoway.

[ 51 : 05 ] You need to stop and think about that. God loves this town. The people of this town. And he loves them so much that he has gathered a people to be his apostles, his witnesses, his sent ones.

And in that process of gathering in this congregation to be his witnesses, he has given us grace grace. So that we can be transformed.

So that we can become missionaries. And that's the thing I suppose to remember today. The grace of God that abounds towards sinners is quite simply a missionary grace.

It is something of God's love for the lost. God's love for people to be redeemed. God's love for sinners. This abundant chesed of God.

God's love for the unlovable. The sheer joy that God himself has in extending grace to unworthy people. The sheer delight of God in sending his son into this world in order to show his grace towards sinners.

[ 52 : 40 ] In order to exercise grace towards sinners. That we share in that today. That we are drawn into that today.

That today if we're believers, it's not something that I'm saying we should be. I'm saying really that it is what we already are. That today as believers, we are evidence of God's salvation, God's mercy, God's grace towards our families, our community, our island, and our nation and the world.

That God freely gives the church. To be a means of his grace towards sinners. Paul says this in Romans 3.

You are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Jesus. So the work of salvation, it's a free gift of God.

And it's pretty clear that that then results in us using that same free gift, that same grace, to bring that message to others. And so the nature of grace is simply this.

[ 54 : 02 ] It is a joyful free gift that transforms people. That's grace today.

A joyful free gift that transforms people. And so I wonder today, have you received that?

Yes, we're here today in church. Have you received the grace of God? Have you experienced this grace that Paul is talking about? This wonderful, free, joyful thing that brings you into the missionary heart of God himself.

I suppose we're already touching a little of this to think about the effect of grace, but it does link into that central identity that Paul has.

If you remember, when Paul talks about receiving from Jesus grace and apostleship, he says it's to bring about the obedience of faith. So the goal of him receiving grace and apostleship, these two words that go together, are this missionary and objective of bringing about the obedience of faith.

[ 55 : 17 ] But just to go back and think about what Paul means when he talks about being an apostle, it's worth looking at verse one. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle.

Now, the important thing here to remember is the word servant that we read in our Bibles is not, if you were reading this as a Roman in the first century, is not the word servant that we think about.

When we think about servants, we maybe think about Downton Abbey. We think perhaps about people wearing slightly posh frock coats and being drivers and maids and all the rest of it in a posh upper-class home.

The word Paul uses for servant here is the word slave. And for some reason, all of our Bibles in the latter half of certainly this last century, perhaps going back a few centuries before, we've been really hesitant to use the word slave to describe this word that Paul uses, or to translate, sorry, this word.

But Paul says he is a slave. And a slave is someone who is engaged wholly in the work and purposes of their master. It's not voluntary.

It's total. And Paul links it to his apostleship. As someone who is sent, I am under compulsion by a master who I cannot refuse.

[ 56 : 44 ] I'm not in a position to refuse this. I'm not in a position to decline this. My liberty is not here to say to God, no, I won't do this. I must comply.

Which is why when Paul comes into verse 5 and he talks about having received grace through Jesus, having received grace and apostleship, he says it's to bring about the obedience of faith. This is what grace does. Grace brings about the obedience of faith. Now that word obedience is really important.

It's not simply this idea that as Christians we're therefore free to do whatever we want, just with that little sprinkling of salvation as a sort of insurance policy for us at the end of days.

That everything will for in the end work out okay for us, but as Christians we can live however we want because we have grace. The point that Paul's making is that the effect of grace is one of transformation of heart to comply, to be shaped by and consistent with the purpose of God.

[ 58 : 04 ] And so faith, properly exercised, results in a life lived to the glory of God. And that comes through grace.

I say that today because probably most of us struggle in some way with sin day by day. If we're believers today, we experience a daily battle with sin in our lives.

And Paul simply, I think the point that Paul's making here, is that in that battle, in that struggle, in that conflict, grace is available to us. A free, joyful gift of experience in God is available to us to help us live obedient lives.

That today, God makes the grace available to you, the strength available to you, freely to live an upright life. And so if you're struggling with addiction, grace is available to you.

If you're struggling secretly with drinking at home, perhaps nobody else sees it. Perhaps it's a hidden sin, but there is an addiction there.

[ 59 : 26 ] You can't free yourself from it. You can't get through the day without it. You can't relax without a drink. Grace is available to you. If you're struggling with angry responses, if you're struggling with a bitter heart, if you're struggling with age-old resentment, if you're struggling with a fixation with pornography, if you're trapped in an abusive, and by that I don't mean somebody who's been abused, but if you are trapped in abusing somebody, there is freedom available to you to be loosed from that.

If today you're locked into any sinful pattern of living, there is grace available for you to become obedient to God.

And that means being free from any of these other things. And it's freely available to you. The effect of grace is to give us joyful liberty from sin.

Because remember, the root idea of grace is this idea of joy, of joy, of rejoicing. And today all of the things that cripple joy in our lives, all of the sinful patterns and habits that bog us down and trap us, there's freedom from them available today in Christ.

Obedience to Jesus and his ways instead of slavery to sin. The master transforms. We are moved from one kingdom of slavery and darkness to a kingdom of liberty and light because our master has changed.

[ 61 : 28 ] Because grace comes to free us. And I see just the time is gone, so let me just conclude on this. The goal of this is to bring about the glory of Jesus.

And I'll stop and look at this verse again, verse 5. Paul has said, Through Jesus we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the nations.

The reason today that God makes grace available to us, the reason God offers us his grace, is so that his glory in Jesus will be seen.

John Piper, American preacher, Baptist, forgive me for quoting, but the ultimate goal of all of God's dealings is that his name, or the name of Christ who is his image, would be known and admired and cherished and praised above all other realities.

The purpose of this is that we would know just how wonderful Jesus is. And that not only that we would know it ourselves, but that we would sing of it.

[ 62 : 58 ] That we would want to tell people just how wonderful Jesus is. And so I wonder today if that's our experience of grace.

Is that your experience of Christianity? That's probably the litmus test actually of it. What's it doing in your heart? When you come to church on a Sunday, do you walk out the door wanting to glorify Jesus?

Do you want to walk out the door singing of how good Jesus is? Because that I think is the litmus test for what this is doing for you. If you're walking out the door thinking you're a better person, I'm

living a righteous life, look how good I am.

I think it might be missing something. If you're walking out the door today and you're thinking that's my duty done. I've fulfilled my obligation. Again, I think you're missing something. The goal of grace, the goal of what we are about as a church, the goal of what the church exists to achieve is that Jesus will be magnified.

And so today, remember, Jesus has come freely to bring joy into your life. The joy of God himself.

[ 64 : 19 ] And that today is available to each and every one of us. To know that the cross has taken away your sin. Your sins are covered in God's grace, as we've sung already.

To know that the Holy Spirit is given as a prize to Jesus to dispense to his people. To bring freedom into their experience.

To bring joy into their experience. To liberate them from all of the horrors of sin and brokenness in this world. To give new hearts in the lives of God's people.

It's all for him. It's all of him. It's all to him. It's all for the glory of God in Christ Jesus. And today we are invited to receive this grace.

Let's pray to him for this now. Heavenly Father, we long to receive grace upon grace. That's our desire, Lord, today.

[ 65 : 24 ] We know we are empty ourselves. We know without the fullness of the grace of God, we are so ill-equipped to face life. And so, Lord, help us today to see Jesus in all of his wonderful sufficiency.

In all that he offers to bring us. In all that he has done. To know that through the cross, sin has been dealt with. Through the empty grave of the resurrection, life is promised.

To know that one day he will return. And bring fullness of joy and rejoicing into the experience of all of his people forevermore.

Help us to receive your grace today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in conclusion in Psalm 67.

Again, this is in Sing Psalms, page 84. This is a psalm about the mercy of God in his great mission.

[ 66 : 38 ] That without God's blessing, without God's mercy, without God's grace, there's nothing. And so when God's grace comes, there is abundance and a joy and a harvest.

And so we're going to sing the whole of the psalm to God's praise. God be merciful and bless us. Shine upon us with your face. That the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace.

We're going to sing to the tune, Martyrs, to God's praise. We'll stand and sing. Lord, we're going to sing. We're going to sing. May God. God be merciful and blessed shine upon us with your face.

That the earth may know your actions and all lands your saving grace. O Lord, may the peoples praise you, may all peoples sing your praise.

Are you just the nation's just thing, ruling over every race?

[ 67 : 51 ] May they sing with joy and gladness, may they all rejoice as one.

O God, may the peoples praise you, as they all unite in song. Then the land will yield its harvest, God will pour its gifts and flow.

God, our God, will surely bless us, all the earth will fear our God.

Now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now and always.

Amen. Amen.