

How to Give Thanks for Your (Messed-Up) Church

// 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

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Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0:00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

So 1 Corinthians 1, I'm going to begin reading in verse 4. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.

That in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech, in all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[1:14] This is the word of the Lord. Praise the Lord. Please be seated. Please be seated. One of the most fascinating questions to ask of history is what if?

What if Alexander the Great didn't die at 32 years old? What if the South had won the war? What if Lennon and McCartney had never met?

All the songs we wouldn't have. When it comes to basketball, many have asked, what if Bill Walton hadn't been benched by injuries?

Bill Walton had an impressive college career at UCLA, winning Player of the Year three times in a row. In case you were wondering, that's very hard to do. Won two titles in a row.

His professional career seemed to be following suit with the Portland Trailblazers. The finals MVP in 1977, overall MVP in 1978, though only playing, I think, 60 games.

[2:20] But then the injuries started, first in his feet, then in his back. He bounced back in 1986 and helped the Celtics win a title. That's one of the funnest teams to watch when you look at old film.

The next year, his career was officially over. His career was 10 seasons long, but he played in less than half of the games.

Then followed surgery after surgery. His ankles ended up being fused together to ease the pain from all of the ankle joint. Numerous back surgery, all told 38 orthopedic surgeries.

Once the pain was so great, he nearly took his life. And so basketball people have been asking for years, what if Bill Walton had been healthy? What if Bill Walton wasn't benched by injuries?

The great Larry Bird said, if Bill could have finished his career from start to finish healthy, there's no telling where he would be ranked among the best.

[3:23] He had all the skills. That's from Larry. But now in a recent list I saw that my son got this book for Christmas. He ranks 74th just ahead of Alonzo Mourning.

If you know anything about basketball, that is an outrage. Yet despite it all, Bill Walton was famous for saying, I am the luckiest man in the world.

I am the luckiest man in the world. How about unluckiest man in the world? After years of pain and setbacks, after being sidelined from the NBA, chasing his dream, searching for relief and never finding any, he gained a different perspective.

He began to be grateful to be alive. Lucky to be alive. Lucky not for the dream, or not thinking about the dreams he didn't get to chase, but lucky that he got to chase the dreams he did.

And he was filled with joy. You know, back in the day, well, this was like 10 years ago, he used to call games, so you would listen to him commentate. Most of the time commentators are so terrible, you just hit mute, and the game would be better.

[4:36] But Bill Walton just had this dumbfounded joy over the game of basketball. I love to listen to him. He had a right perspective of his life, and it made all the difference.

Everywhere he went, there's stories about Bill Walton spreading joy. Well, these verses urge us to have a right perspective of the church, a divine perspective.

of what God's done. How could Bill Walton give thanks for a career plagued by injuries and cut short in his time? How can we give thanks continually for the church, despite our disappointments, despite our flaws and shortcomings, despite the hopes we haven't materialized?

How can we give thanks when we continue to wake up early and drag the trailer and set up gobs of chairs? How can we give thanks even when some relationships that we hoped we'd be giving thanks for in a different way haven't turned out the way we liked?

How can we avoid the ever-present danger of biting and devouring, as the Apostle Paul says in Galatians, of tearing one another down with gossip and slander?

[5:52] Familiarity, they say, breeds contempt. So how can we walk together in a way that's different? How can we walk together for years and yet still find it easy to honor one another, encourage one another, rejoice with one another, comfort one another?

In these verses, Paul is giving thanks and he's inviting us into something that's truly staggering. Corinth is a messed up church.

You think your church is messed up? Corinth is a messed up church. It's settled for \$3 worth of gospel. In the verses ahead, the Apostle Paul will be blunt and direct, almost sarcastic and biting, because he's got to rebuke them for some horrible things, yet here at the outset, his heart overflows with thanksgiving.

Why? Because despite all of her shortcomings, the Apostle Paul has a right perspective of a church that's gathered to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul has a divine perspective and this is my burden I want you to have.

I want us to have a divine perspective. Otherwise, this won't work. We need a divine perspective.

Here it is. If you never lose a divine perspective of your church, you will never run out of reasons to give thanks for those in your church.

[7:15] If you never lose a divine perspective of your church, you will never run out of reasons to give thanks for those in your church. I have titled this message, How to Give Thanks for a Messed-Up Church.

How to continually give thanks for a messed up church. And I'm not a pessimist. I think it's a wonderful church, but you're going to need this.

First point is remember past grace. Remember past grace. How do you continue to give thanks for your messed up church? Well, you remember past grace.

Paul begins by giving thanks. He begins almost every letter by giving thanks with the exceptions of Galatians and he doesn't give thanks there because he's even angrier there than he is here. He's getting right to the point there.

And he begins with a typical pattern. You see it right there. Look in verse four. I give thanks to God always for you.

[8:14] And then he tells why. He tells the purpose. Why is he giving thanks? That's what we see right there in verse four. So I give thanks always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.

The focus of this thanksgiving is on the grace of God. Paul gives thanks in other letters for grace.

He mentions grace in Ephesians 1 but no letter, no letter with, in the thanksgiving, no letter focuses on the grace of God quite like this.

What Paul remembers as he remembers the Corinthians when he's writing from Ephesus, what he remembers is he remembers the grace of God. He's not merely remembering favor that God has towards his people but the divine intervention, the decisive intervention, the life-changing intervention of the power of God in their first days of faith.

Now it's helpful for us to roll back the tape a little bit to see what Paul saw. Now last week I introduced you or we took some time to give you the background of Corinth.

I want to give you a little bit of the background of the church in Corinth. Paul arrived in February or March of A.D. 50 and he was pretty beat up, literally. If you look, actually flip your Bible one page and look in 1 Corinthians 2.2, he says, actually 2.3, I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

[9:47] Paul's not talking about his personality there. He's not saying he's not a people person so he got a little nervous in front of the people. He's describing the way he arrived.

He arrived in Corinth after being beaten in Philippi. He went to Thessalonica after that and there was a mob uprising and then he went to Berea and the folks came from Thessalonica to chase him down in Berea.

perhaps the bruises were still visible. He says that in some places. You've seen my scars. Perhaps they were visible when he arrived.

Whether they were visible or not, Paul must have arrived discouraged because this missionary work had been pretty fruitless lately.

It appears that he came to Corinth to see Aquila and Priscilla and if you want a fascinating afternoon study, study the names of Aquila and Priscilla and how they trace through these letters, these people that were not ministers of the gospel but nevertheless were assisting the gospel work much like your life and my life, assisting the gospel work wherever it went.

[11:03] So it appears he arrived there as Acts 18 says. He arrived to see Aquila and Priscilla because Aquila and Priscilla were tent makers by trade. That means they were leather workers like Paul.

You didn't sleep in a Ramada Inn. I hope you don't sleep in a Ramada Inn but you wouldn't sleep in any hotel back in those days. You would sleep in a tent worked up with leather and so Paul arrived there to work.

Perhaps he got a stall with them in Corinth. In the center of all this trade and buy-sell trade he got a stall with them. Perhaps he was preparing for the Isthmian Games the following year making tents to prepare for the surge of population that would have arrived around those games.

We don't know all that but we know he arrived knowing he could find work along with them. Then Paul does what he does in every town. He goes first to the synagogue because the gospel comes first for the Jew as Romans 118 says and then to the Gentile and so he goes first to the Jew but the Jews run him out.

They oppose him and revile him so the apostle Paul must have thought this is going to be just like Philippi and then the Lord appears to him in a vision.

[12:15] We have this for you. The apostle Paul came to him. Now this is brilliant. Sometimes we might say the Lord speaks to me but he doesn't do this. The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision do not be afraid Paul.

I know the scars but don't be afraid go on speaking do not be silent for I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you for I have many in this city who are my people.

What a promise right? That'll play you know divine presence I will be with you divine protection no one will attack you.

What would change in our life in the to fear but not to fear life would change if we knew no one could harm us. We'd walk through alleys with no fear divine but not just divine presence divine protection divine appointments I have many in this city who are mine.

What's that mean? I have people in this city chosen by me claimed by me who belong to me and they don't even know it yet. after being run out of three different cities running for his life and being opposed and reviled can you imagine receiving that word?

[13:42] See you know what the apostle does? He spends 18 months preaching the word of God. Many believed because they were his people already there. So when Paul thought about Corinth when he thought about the church in Corinth despite all its flaws and shortcomings despite all the correction he's about to bring Paul thought first of the grace of God the God who interrupted their hell bound race and turned them from serving dead idols to serve the living God the conversion their conversion just like yours was all of sovereign grace and their beginning was all of God.

Now the action is throughout this text if you look down there with me Paul is not merely talking about the grace of God being experienced but the grace of God being given why is God's grace and God gives it that's what we see look down there because of the grace of God that was given that's a divine passive who is the giver there?

God alone and so the grace of God was given you see the divine passive again in verse 5 were enriched the testimony was confirmed all of this is emphasizing the activity of God what made the difference in the Corinthians life was not the profession of faith but the God who intervened with divine grace if that weren't clear enough bracketing this section is an emphasis on calling Paul

talked last week about being called but also everyone who calls on the name of Jesus Christ was called to be a saint look down there in verse 9 the emphasis on calling again by whom you were called what does that mean?

It's not a reference to an invitation or decision it refers to the divine act in which those who are outside of Christ are united with Christ such that all his benefits flow to them and we see that all throughout the New Testament that I don't have time to unpack but it's everywhere Romans 8 three times in three verses 28-30 wonderful so what is this saying all their life began with divine grace but it's very important it's not just in what Paul says this emphasis on the divine grace the past grace that made all the difference it's in what he doesn't say in Thessalonians he thanks them for their faith and love same thing in Ephesus he doesn't mention their work and labor as he does in other places he doesn't mention anything about their status their wealth anything about the big city of Corinth it's like writing to a church in New York and not mentioning that they're in New York because New Yorkers think they're the center of the world and Corinthians did too why they thought we are wise we are strong we're going to see that in chapter 4 we are important but Paul says the only thing that makes you any different than anybody else is the grace of God

I love that remembering our conversion remembering past grace is meant to bring about humility the people that rightly see the evidence of past grace and the fact that grace is divine activity that man could not produce should be the most humble people in the world Charles Spurgeon says the fact that conversion and salvation are all of God is a humbling truth it is because of its humbling character that men do not like it to be told that God must save me if I am to be saved and that I am in his hand as clay is in the hand of a potter I do not like it saith one well I thought you would not whoever dreamed you would the truth is precious all throughout the the Puritans used to have this phrase it was mainly it was a story about a man seeing a guy his hearse being or his casket being carried down the street and he said there go I but for the grace of God and it became a phrase that many people shared why to describe what must be our disposition because the only thing that makes us different is grace it's a divine perspective that made all the different now these verses are a treasure trove if you apply them to yourself the only thing that sets you apart is the grace of God if you apply them it could change your life but they're so important for us as a church why are we together you ever like flip through that prayer book and thought why are we together it's the grace of God in fact the story of this church and we don't tell it often the story of this church is the grace of God this church was being planted long before I knew anything about it because God was gathering a people that had a heart for his grace in this city and had a heart for this city what is that who causes churches to spring up of people that never met that can't imagine life without each other now the grace of God you know again and again in the Old Testament the problem was not remembering it was the grace of God that set them apart the epitaph over Israel's grave again and again as they soon forgot the command to remember is one of the most repeated commands for the people of God in the New Testament and for all time and so let us never forget past grace we look around this room you look around the room and enter the rooms of our life together let us never forget past grace celebrate so remember past grace celebrate present grace how do you continually give thanks for your messed up church to remember past grace and celebrate present grace the idea is the grace of God does not just leave you as you are you may come as you are but you must not stay as you are why because the grace of God intervenes it adorns our life with fruit and gifts and graces the grace of God is about getting things done it's not about

[20:00] God having warm feelings towards you who really cares if God has warm feelings I mean you should care we should care if he has warm feelings but it's so much more than that it's about his power at work sending forth his power to turn you to serve him and to worship him so that's what we see immediately these divine passages that I mentioned a moment ago I won't mention any more grammar terms today but verse 5 in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and knowledge even as a testimony Christ was confirmed among you Paul's combining two metaphors here he's using a metaphor of wealth of money you know in rich this idea believers are rich in Christ Christ became poor so that we might become rich he supplies every need of ours according to his riches it seems that in Corinth he especially uses this metaphor as he does throughout the letter because they thought they were rich but they were rich in worldly material things they were not or they failed to see how rich they were in Christ and so he's saying you were enriched you were enriched you were supplied with so many things then he uses this legal metaphor as well you were confirmed this idea that the testimony about Christ just like any testimony any court has to be confirmed by eyewitnesses well your testimony was confirmed by the spirit of God and the gifts of

his grace in your life the seal of his work was placed in your the seal was given to you it was implanted in your life stamped into your life with gifts and graces that no man could erase from you and they come together the idea is the grace of God invades our life fills them with the riches of fruit gifts grace and these gifts confirm the work of God this wonderful idea of being rich in Christ and being confirmed for who you are in Christ the idea is grace is not just a thing of a path grace is a thing of the present grace is the power of God at work leading sinners to worship him to serve him to glorify him and so what are the graces that he especially points out for the Corinthians and this is where this thing gets crazy he says look in verse 4 you were enriched in every way in all speech and all knowledge these are two of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 speech or utterance is probably a better way to say it there refers to spiritual gifts of tongues prophecy and interpreted gifts so these gifts of speech gifts knowledge refers to spiritual insight into the mysteries of God often this idea of revelation into deep things and so revelation and knowledge is what is referenced here but why does Paul mention these two gifts so why not faith and love and why utterance and knowledge well the reason is the Corinthians were enamored with these two gifts they were all about the spiritual gift these were some

AG guys all about the spiritual gifts enamored with them so much so that they thought that those who had these gifts were more spiritual they thought that those who had these gifts were more special there's another term he uses throughout this letter they were puffed up it's an insightful term it's being used to refer to arrogance but the idea is you're just full of hot air we even use that phrase right they were arrogant and Paul is grieved in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul says it would you know let me read the quote when you come together as a church it is not for the better it's for the worse like imagine that in the letter when you get together on Sunday it's not for better it's for worse you're doing damage you might just stay out cancel church the snowpocalypse is here just cancel church in fact cancel the rest of the year it's better that you not gather and one of the reasons he says that is because of this the misuse of these gifts in the rest of the letter he'll confront them correct them rebuke them he will say if you have prophetic powers and understand all knowledge have all wisdom and all faith to remove mountains but have not love you are nothing but here Paul thanks God for these gifts he even thanks God that they're not lacking in any spiritual gift you have to see this

Gordon Fee says what is remarkable here is the apostle's ability to thank God for the very things in the church that because of the abuses are also causing him grief his ability to thank God for the things in the church that because of the abuses are giving him grief when my younger brother was a boy I guess I was a boy too but you know he's a little bit three years younger than me he was obsessed with autographs from professional baseball and basketball players during one season a flood of autographs began pouring into our house like what's going on like all these autographs Nolan Ryan Robert Pears John Starks we found out my brother was writing to them telling them he had a terminal illness he was dying of leukemia and he just hoped to have their autograph before he passed on from this life to the next my dad was furious what in the world can you imagine if my dad began the rebuke of my little brother and said son

I thank God for you my son for your industriousness your shrewdness your farsightedness your unwillingness to take no for an answer thank God my son you've been endowed with these gifts but that's what the apostle Paul is doing here these gifts have led to so much abuse rivalry competition in crowds out crowds hierarchy super spirituality and the apostle Paul says I thank God on the one hand this prayer is meant this thanksgiving is meant to be stunning as we see the heart of the apostle he is more aware of their graces than he is their flaws he's more aware of their graces than he is their flaws sometimes we get around someone that we have a bit of beef with and we just have to blurt it out you know we cannot hold it in you're unable to say anything else but that's not because of the beef that's because of our arrogance it's the arrogant that can't see evidences of grace and Paul is very aware of their flaws he is going to lay them out but he's more aware of their graces more aware of the grace of God on the other hand this prayer is meant to urge us to the same attitude

I don't think it's accidental the apostle Paul includes this prayer why because he's saying this type of attitude would make all the difference in the Corinthian church this I follow Paul I follow Apollos or all these things all this this would make all the difference in so much rivalry if there was this awareness that grace is at work and so he's calling them this same attitude to put off rivalry arrogance and jealousy we need that same attitude as well do we have this attitude are you good at

seeing the grace of God at work and those around you perhaps especially those with whom you disagree those who sit on the wrong side of the church those who bother you those you need to adjust what is it like to work with you what is it like to be your friend what is it like to be in your community group what is it like to be your daughter or your son what is it like to be married to you are you

[28:43] Mr. Wright or Mrs. Wright all the time to my shame the story of our marriage is that God when God brought us together because of my sin it seemed to Kim as if she married Mr.

Wright and she was Mrs. Wright one of the greatest regrets of my life is how I treated my wife in those years that year and it was this type of teaching that it's like the scales fell off my eyes that the problem was not the lack of fruit and grace and good things going on in our life the problem was me this is what you need I mean sorry relationships would completely change if you got this if we got this you have a precious opportunity you are in a messed up church you know and your family I hate to break it to you messed up it's not just because of the weird uncle it's because of sin sin's invaded your house it's coming to a theater near you but you need to get this you know sometimes I think we think the truly mature the truly spiritual person is the prophet you know the one that can lay it right between the lines the one who has the word you know the knowledge but we're missing that sometimes I think actually

I do believe that the more and more mature more spiritual person is the one who sees grace in those that have flaws the one who can point out things the truly mature is the one who has this attitude looking around trying to unveil and apply grace of God wherever he turns Sinclair Ferguson says only by seeing our sin do we come to see the need for and wonder of grace but it's now this is huge if you get this but exposing sin is not the same thing as unveiling and applying grace we must be familiar with and exponents of it's multifaceted power and know how to apply it to a variety of spiritual conditions truth be told exposing sin is easier than applying grace that's right it's easier to find things anybody can write a sin list whip-dee-doo you're not that impressive if you can write a sin list but you find me a grace list find me a grace list in your house and that's where it's impressive why?

because finding a grace list is applying grace for alas we are more intimate with the former than we sometimes are with the latter therein lies our weakness and so we have this wonderful privilege and honor to go in the work of exposing grace grace is at work all around you and so we get to celebrate it we get to honor it we get to rejoice in it we get to make a grace list one practice that I can fall off sometimes but do is I just write down grace a lot of times I don't share with anybody but I pull out the journal and it should not be hard but sometimes it's hard grace where's grace that guy stood up at the youth meeting testified to biblical manhood this gal was there whatever it is writing down grace writing down answers to prayer writing down people doing things that they would not do people don't think of other people in the flesh write it down get a little journal get your journal you know

I don't journal a lot but I do want to write down grace where I see it you should too celebrate grace and you should actually tell people too yeah you should tell we got to celebrate this you know this is a party going on there's a party going on right here and grace is happening all over the place and so write it down and tell but I say sometimes I write it down because you can't point it all out I just want to be overwhelmed with it finally anticipate future grace so how do you continually give thanks for your messed up church you do it by remembering past grace celebrating present grace and anticipating future grace this prayer or this this Thanksgiving just keeps getting better and better you know it begins almost as if the the Apostle Paul just soars and now he reaches a place that knows no boundaries he reminds the Corinthians you have not only been recipients of past grace you're not only the recipients of present grace but you will be the recipients of future grace that knows no bounds and will sustain you to the end look down at verse 7

[33:43] I already mentioned that you're not lacking in any spiritual gift and so you have all this in this present as you await the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes when Paul talks about the end what's going to happen at the end he talks about our final adoption he talks about our hope of righteousness he talks about the revealing of the sons of God but here all the focus is on him who for our sake became sin and was crushed he will sustain you not merely toward your adoption not merely to the arrival of your hope hope that is not seen or hope that is seen is not hope not merely to the revealing of the sons of God but to the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ the Corinthians were all about revelation knowledge insight discernment what is he saying the great

revelation the great mystery is not in any of these spiritual gifts it seems so hot and cool the great mystery the great revelation will be in that day seeing this one who was pierced you can tell a lot about people by the way they talk what they talk about lovers talk about love fanatics talk about their team preppers talk about prepping but Paul can't stop talking about

Jesus Christ I love this the apostle Paul has been riveted he was riveted on that Damascus road ten times in nine verses he says our Lord Jesus Christ he doesn't say it every time but he does use that ten times he references the Lord Jesus Christ but he also uses this Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly why this wonderful title that captures all that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the Lord the man Jesus of Nazareth whom God has exalted above all and that's who's coming and grace is coming in his wings and then he continues he will sustain you to the end look down there with me if you have a Bible please keep it for you he will sustain you so at the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ who it's modifying the Lord Jesus Christ who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ you know we often use that word sustain sustenance keeps us guards us but the emphasis is not on

God keeping us giving us enough Gatorade to the end that's not really the emphasis here this word sustain is the same word used for confirm up there in verse 6 the testimony about Jesus Christ was confirmed and so the same word is used he will confirm you in the end really is the idea it's a legal metaphor the idea is the grace of God confirmed you as one of his and then on the final day the Lord will confirm you as his own the faithful witness will be there and so he's saying ye will confirm you guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Christian the day of the Lord is not a day of darkness it's not a terrible day it's not a day of gloom it's not a day of clouds and thick darkness it is the day of the Lord Jesus Christ Paul is doing something radical there for these any of the Jewish believers in the church he's changing the day of the Lord to help them see not a fearful day for everyone all who have trusted in Jesus Christ wonderful day and as if it couldn't get any better Paul ends matter of factually so that ends one sentence and he goes to the next one and he says God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord all the titles just jammed in there just wonderful brilliant God is spirit God is holy God is love God is light and God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of his son what does that mean what does it mean what is he saying God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship what does it mean it means you may lose your home you may lose your job you may lose your friend you may lose your mom you may lose your child you may lose your spouse but you will never lose fellowship with

God through Christ fellowship that's what the whole Bible is talking about all of it the ark the ladder the ram the cloud and fire the Passover lamb the man of the rock the bronze snake all the bulls and goats were pointing forward to fellowship through our Lord Jesus Christ he is the means the way the truth and the life the way we commune with God this is the secret sauce!

[39:03] oh! this is the gospel is it's not fire insurance it is fellowship with God all the world has a cup to offer you that's empty that'll never satisfy but God calls you to fellowship with him in our Lord Jesus Christ that's what I offer you you know there's no games no riches no gold no you can have your best life you might follow

Christ and things seem to get a little bit worse but I can tell you you will have one that will stick closer than a brother that's the offer of the gospel Christ came the righteous for the unrighteous what so that he might bring us to God oh man I read this the other night I just love this quote it just riveted me he said Thomas Brooks good old Puritan a man no sooner enjoys his earthly portion than but another man itches the finger with it finger with his portion but God is a portion that fire cannot burn floods cannot drown thieves cannot steal enemies cannot confiscate soldiers cannot plunder a man may take away my gold but he cannot take away my

God that's what this means does it mean once saved always saved it surely does not mean once saved go do whatever you want but it does mean those who are saved will be saved all the way the grace of God does not rescue you and then hand you the keys the grace of God takes you all the way to God so what's this mean in the local church God is faithful we've been called into fellowship there's anticipating future grace it should mean keep short list and sometimes in a small town like we live in you gotta be careful who you offend careful who you cut off and that's just because we're living with them you gotta spend eternity with the people you worship with so keep short list they shouldn't be on there long really you shouldn't have much of a list it also means give thanks several years after coming to

Christian I was reading about C.S. Lewis and he talked about how he didn't really like church that much you know that's not a quote we pull out much on C.S. Lewis but he didn't like church that much he said he thought he could do it on his own reading and studying on his own after all he said that the things they sung in church was just fifth rate poetry to sixth rate music so if you've ever struggled with the church music as I went on I saw the great merit of it I came against different people with quite different outlooks and different education then gradually my conceit which was actually the root of it just began peeling off I realized that the hymns which were just sixth rate music were nevertheless being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic side boots in the opposite pew and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots in other place he said if you saw what the person in the pew next to you will look like in the new world you would be tempted to fall down and worship them why that this is why we need it to be riveted we're not here because of some social connection you know we're not here because of some common educational things or common backgrounds or anything we're here because we've been apprehended by the grace of

God we're here because we've been brought into the Lord Jesus Christ we're here because we will worship together for eternity this God who became poor for us so let the truth is you are not an accident you're a miracle this church is not an accident it's a miracle it's a miracle of God's grace what if Bill Walton wasn't benched what if we never lost sight of the divine perspective what if we never forgot past grace what if we never failed to celebrate presence grace what if we never lost sight of future grace what kind of church would we be praise God we're going there don't lose sight of this and you'll never run out of reasons to thank God for your church let us pray father in heaven thank you for these few minutes thank you for the opportunity to sit under your word thank you Lord for the reminder that the grace of God is greater than our sin that where sin abounded grace abounded all the more

[45 : 23] I thank you God for the trophies of grace throughout this room people that just should not be here but people that you've apprehended you've extended grace oh God I pray that you would open our eyes more and more Lord we turn from the arrogance and pride that sees mainly flaws grace and we ask you to renew our minds to see grace and more grace and we pray that you'd unleash your grace in our church we thank you we thank you for all the evidence of grace that abound and we'll continue that work we pray in Christ's name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt

Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com