

God's Mercy & Grace

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- [0 : 00] Hello, I just want to go ahead and get started because I don't know how to say less than I'm going to try to say. Which is the mark of a bad teacher, so just buckle up.
- So let me pray for us and we'll get started. Our Father in heaven, we have so much to be thankful for. We're thankful for your son, Jesus, and that you made a way for us to be forgiven and be restored and to come home to you.
- We pray this morning that you be here by your spirit as we discuss weighty things. That you would lead us, give us submissive hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.
- So I would like to issue similar caveats to last week for those of you who weren't here, which is what we're not going to be doing this morning is any kind of a comprehensive presentation on grace.
- So this week we're going to be talking about the grace of God and our ongoing series and the attributes of God. And, you know, in 45 minutes, there's just no way we can, you know, make this an academic study of grace.
- [1 : 24] My approach, rather, is going to be to just present some things that I think mostly we're going to be in agreement about and then discuss and see if we can draw out some encouragements, actually, at the end of the day.
- So with that said, the plan is to approach grace with these lenses.
- The context of grace, the method of grace, the mystery of grace, the timing of grace, and the magnitude of grace.
- That's a lot of lenses. And so I'm going to try to push through because I think, you know, we have this beautiful mountain, as it were, that we can look at from different angles.
- And I didn't want to leave out any important angles. So first thing I wanted to talk about is the context of grace.
- [2 : 34] And by that I mean we are, of course, not approaching the attribute of grace where God is merciful, God is gracious. We're not approaching this idea in a vacuum.
- It's not as if we found a rabbit in the woods and we put him in a cage and we studied him. And, you know, now we found out, oh, he's a gracious thing. It's it's there's the context of even talking about God's grace.
- We have to start with sin and the wrath of God that is the result of our human rebellion and sin.
- And otherwise, if we go on to talk about the other parts of grace without that backdrop, we are missing why grace is even necessary in the first place.
- And it's rich and deep meaning. So I wanted to just pose a question to you that I like to pose to my young children who aren't young anymore.
- [3 : 43] But I would say to them, so what's the worst sin a person can do? Like and they love to play this game, right? They're like, what is the worst or what is the best or what if what's the game they play?

The if would you rather you ever play? Would you rather sort of in that vein? And I'm like, no, I don't want to play. Would you rather not with them giving the things?

Because it's like, would you rather eat a bucket of dead worms or like, no, neither. But if I ask them and if I ask you, what is the worst sin a person can do?

What's just springs to mind right out of the gate? Not believe in God. So we have the theologically minded non six year old in the room. Yes. Well, right.

So go ahead. Accusing Jesus as being demonic. Wow. Yeah, I think I think most ordinary people tend to think horizontally when you when you ask, like, what's the worst thing?

[4 : 50] What's the worst sin? Right. Especially kids like what's the worst thing? Oh, you kill somebody or, you know, it you it's man on man. Crime is the the typical instinct of most people.

But I think Raul's right. I think that what the Bible teaches is the vertical nature of human sin is what starts the wrath.

So I actually I want to read some of Romans one. This is going to be familiar. But I really want to get this out on the table before we move on to other aspects of grace.

It's a little bit of a lengthy passage, but I think it will be helpful for us. So the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor give gave thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts.

[6 : 02] Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God. He gave them up to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity.

They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. And it goes on to the to the horizontal list. Right. But what we observe is.

The chief sin of man is to not acknowledge God as God and to not give him thanks. Seems kind of appropriate for this week.

And in so doing elevate themselves as God. And exercise their own autonomy against the God of the universe.

And because of that, we face the wrath of God as humankind. And I just want to pause and make sure that we don't use church words and just skip on by without feeling the weight.

[7 : 12] And to have the God of the universe that created everything pitted against you should give us pause.

And this is the backdrop of even discussing God's mercy and grace.

In the world that we live in now, which is the world that I want to talk about.

Not the theoretical world of did Adam and Eve receive mercy and grace before the fall and all that. We could we could talk about all that. But right now it doesn't matter because we said we want to be God.

And we all inherited that disposition. And that's the dark backdrop. Any one want to comment or thoughts or questions about the context?

[8 : 25] We already ran the red light. You can't go back and take it back. Yeah. And I mean, obviously, like I said, we're going to assume some things in this class this morning.

We could spend the whole class talking about that. And there are obviously people out there that completely disagree with that. And, you know, they disagree with that's the position that we're in.

But for the sake of this class, we'll assume that we're kind of on the same page, that we're in big trouble. Last week, when we talked about the holiness of God, we talked about the problem in terms of the chasm that opened up between sinful man and holy, perfect, righteous God.

And how Jesus bridged that chasm. And this week, I think these are just words that are trying to describe some similar things where we face as humankind the wrath of God against our sin of autonomy, especially.

So quick definition, a simple definition of mercy and grace. Mercy being not receiving the punishment you deserve.

[9 : 47] And grace being receiving favor you don't deserve. Again, we could spend an hour just talking about that, but we're not going to.

But I just want to say that without mercy, the flood of grace can't flow for the Christian.

Right. We have to have the debt resolved. And I want before we move on, I just want to say the obvious.

This is I feel like is such a hard thing for us to hold on to. We do not deserve mercy. By definition, we do not deserve mercy.

By definition, we do not deserve grace. Just I'm planting a flag because as we move on, it's just a hard thing to hold on to.

[10 : 56] And I'm speaking, you know, experientially for myself. It's hard to not slip into. Losing grip on the fact that we, by definition, don't deserve mercy and by definition, don't deserve grace.

All right. So the method of grace, the method of grace. Since we don't deserve grace. By definition, again, God gives grace by his own free choice.

So. So. Moses says to God, after heinous sin of God's people, Moses says, please show me your glory.

And God said. I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord.

And. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. Interesting that.

[12 : 25] The goodness of God is put right there in front of us. Like here it comes. I'm going to show you my goodness. And it's mine to reveal.

To whom I choose. Already. Let's not forget the context. Right. Because if we can keep the context in front of us.

These. Teachings of the scriptures, I think, can be put in their proper.

Light. And we'll talk more about that. Few verses for you. These are familiar about.

How we cannot earn grace. God must. Give us grace. Paul says. So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

[13 : 29] For by grace, you've been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Now to the one who works. His wages are not counted as a gift, but his due.

And to the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly. His faith is counted as righteousness. So now I want to pause and just ask this question.

Why does the freedom of God irk us so much? Raul. Because we want to be autonomous. We want to be free from God like Adam and Eve.

We want to be the captains of our own destiny. We want to be the final reference point for all human predication. We're God, not God. Okay. Anybody else?

When we encounter like the clear expression that God's free to show grace and mercy to whom he wills, why does that bother us?

[14 : 41] Because we wonder why he might show it to some and others. Yes. And then what's behind that that makes us like, ah. It's not fair.

We don't want to be a kind of a living God. Yeah, that's an interesting angle too. Yeah, it also, framed that way, so much of life in the flesh is dependent on your capabilities and your function and your diligence, your effort.

But God's statement there eliminates that. It has nothing to do with you. Yeah, apparently. Yeah. I think I'm going to just speak for myself now that we all encounter things in life where, you know, like my family, it was a foster family, so I had a bunch of foster siblings growing up, a lot of them.

And some of them have been dealt a hand in life that was unimaginably bad. And some of them were, could not receive the love of our family and my parents who were trying to, you know, love kids.

And, you know, the older you get, you encounter people and you feel like, is it really their fault? Like they got so, such a, like you think of worst case scenarios, like some kid in the Sudan born behind a dumpster and no parents that love them.

[16 : 23] And just like these horrible, horrific things we can cook up in our minds. And we say, how is that fair? And I think that I want to take a sidebar for a second, a hermeneutical sidebar, and just say that there are places where we don't, we aren't given satisfactory answers.

God is not inviting us behind the curtain of Godhood and saying, hey, you know what? Here's how it all works. In fact, we have some explicit places in scripture where we get to the end of some arguments and reasoning and God says, here's the thing.

I'm God and you're just going to have to trust me. But what we do have, I think, is we have places where we're making inferences that are perfectly logical, perfectly reasonable.

We see God choosing here and not choosing here and being God. And we're like, maybe he's just capricious. Maybe. You know, but we have to also look at, we have to test our inferences against other clear passages in scripture.

Inferences meaning I take verse A, totally true verse. I take verse B, totally true verse. I add them up and deduce, well, maybe God's just, you know, not loving or good after all.

[18 : 02] So we encounter passages on this topic of God showing grace to who he chooses. We encounter verses like this.

We encounter, as surely as I live, declares the sovereign Lord, Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

Turn, turn from your ways. Why will you die? The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God, first Timothy, God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. All I'm trying to do here is just say, if we're adding things up that equal, God is capricious or he doesn't care or he's not loving.

That doesn't hold up against other things that scripture says about God. What are we left with? We're left with the same sort of place we're left when the Bible says, Jesus is a fully God.

[19 : 29] He is fully God and he's fully man. You can't take that to the lab and figure that out.

He's God. It's behind the curtain. And what we're left with is we must trust him and we must test our inferences against other clear passages of scripture to guard our own hearts.

Because Satan, what does Satan do? He twists what God says. He wants us to hate God. He wants us not to trust God.

When God comes and says, you can have everything, all of this, run around naked in the garden. You just can't, just stay away from this thing. Why?

Why? Why do we have to stay away from that thing? Right? It's, it's, so this is a tool. That's all I'm saying.

[20 : 35] This is a tool that we have in our toolbox to keep our inner conversation on track with what other things that God's revealed to us about himself and his motives.

All right. Method of grace.

Obviously, if grace is given freely, then how do we get it? This, this is just being Christian 101, but someone talk us through.

How do we get grace if it's a free gift? Anybody, put it out there for us.

Through faith in the Lord Jesus who gives us himself by faith. So we take hold of Jesus and we're united together and what he's done for us.

[21 : 45] Before the creation of the world and the covenant of redemption and the Holy Spirit, Jesus and God the Father planned out who would be called, chosen, predestined, sanctified, and justified.

Glorify all that. That's my answer. And I'm sticking to it. You know, I think that the bottom line is that we know we can't earn grace.

We know by definition we can't earn grace. We must receive grace. And that has a lot of side effects and I think we'll go on to talk about some of those a little bit later.

Alright, the mystery of grace. The mystery of grace. So what I mean by the mystery of grace, there's actually a lot of mystery but I just want to hone in on one part here which is how does a God of perfect justice pass over evil and is still a just and perfect judge and a holy God.

Now, maybe some of you haven't gone down this line of thinking but it's important I think it's important that we talk about this because let me put a passage in front of you that sort of crystallizes this dilemma and then we'll just talk about it real quick.

[23 : 29] So this is Exodus 34, 6 and 7 back to Moses saying he wants to see God's glory. Moses is begging God not to leave the people because they made the golden calf and recall that moment.

and the Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

So that's awesome. Love that part. but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

salvation. So at face value, we have God telling Moses and telling us, here's what I'm like.

Here's who I am and here's what I'm like. And by the way, these two verses are the most quoted verses in various forms in all the Bible.

[24 : 58] the authors of Scripture picked these verses up and repurposed them all throughout the Scriptures. And so I think it's good that we pause here and just say, what is going on here?

How can God say, I will by no means clear the guilty right after He just said, I will forgive and show mercy and clear the guilty.

That's what showing mercy is. It's almost like saying, I am a God that will clear the guilty and offer mercy undeserved and also by no means will I do that.

So how do we make sense of this?

And what I'd like to do is point us to Jesus and say that Jesus paid and atone for our sins vindicating God's mercy and grace.

[26 : 18] The reason that God can say, I'm not just going to clear evil and pass over it is because He had a plan to pay for that evil Himself.

And I know this is not unfamiliar, but I want to pause and meditate on it a little bit together so that we feel the weight of it because we must have a perfectly just God.

We must. have a God of mercy and grace or else we have no hope.

We don't want a God that just says, you know, you raped someone's mom, but it's okay because you know what, I'm a forgiving.

I think this is how I used to approach this question. I would conjure up how I forgive the people in my life that have wronged me, but to be honest, no one's kidnapped a sibling of mine and murdered them behind a dumpster.

[27 : 38] We can't have a God who's not a righteous judge. We don't want a God that's not a righteous judge. And so there's a tension there.

So let's turn back to Romans for a second and listen to this and see if we can feel God telling us how this is being resolved.

So this is Romans 3 starting verse 23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's our context of wrath. And are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

So there is the gospel in a nutshell. Then Paul goes on to say, this was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

So I take this to mean that God has not given evil what it's deserved at every turn. He has shown real grace and real mercy.

[29 : 03] And so then how is he right to do that? Yeah. And then if we bring it home to ourselves, it's like, you know, there's the cheap, there's, you guys know the people that grab their spears against cheap grace.

And look, people fall off the horse of truth so easily, including all of us, of course, right?

But some people are like, Jesus loves me, God forgives us, and they're like, they cheapen the grace, right?

Then other serious people that take God seriously are like, you can't do that. You can't just run around like all happy, bubbly, light, evangelical stuff.

And then they're like, well, we want to bring justice back. You know? It's like, okay. But we have to be careful because we can fall off that horse on either side.

[30 : 35] I think I can remember going to my children and trying to tell them why we talk about Jesus all the time, why we sing about Jesus all the time, why is it always Jesus, Jesus, Jesus?

You know? And I will pull them aside and I will say, look, Jesus paid for our sins so that God's justice could be satisfied so that we can step into grace.

Without Jesus and without the cross, we have no hope. And it also answers, I'm sidebar here, but it also answers some of the legitimate questions of our time, which are, how is Jesus the only way?

It just seems so narrow. Right? But if we have a divine problem of wrath, then we must have a divine solution to the wrath.

And the exclusivity of Jesus begins to make sense. So, why does this matter? Why does this matter?

[32 : 02] Why does this discussion about preserving the justice of God and the mercy of grace of God matter?

So, I want to read just one quote for you, and then we'll move on. This is Jerry Bridges, actually, who's a kind of a popular author, as probably most of you know.

It is at the cross where God's law and God's grace are both most brilliantly displayed, where His justice and His mercy are both glorified.

But it is also at the cross where we are most humbled. It is at the cross where we admit to God and to ourselves that there is absolutely nothing we can do to earn or merit our salvation.

salvation. Now, real quick, if we rewind back to Romans 1, chief sin of man is we don't acknowledge God and we don't give Him thanks.

[33 : 14] But can you see the flavor when we begin to realize what Jesus has done and what God has done without giving up His justice and without giving up His mercy and grace that that does lead us back to a place where we acknowledge Him.

In order to receive this grace, we acknowledge Him and we give Him thanks. Those two things are as natural. As soon as we cross over and receive, we are doing both of those things in some measure.

They connect. the timing of grace.

The timing of grace. This has been on my heart for a long time, not just through the lens of grace, which is where we find ourselves right now in the timeline of redemption.

if we don't get that right, if we don't understand the season that we're in, it results in all sorts of unhealthy spiritual consequences.

[34 : 49] Let me read this passage and I'll try to explain it through the lens of grace. So this is from 1 Peter chapter 1, starting in verse 10.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

God's grace. So I'm going to pause and just say this is referencing grace that we have received already that we now look back to in our season because we have Jesus came and we have the record of it and we have the Holy Spirit attesting to it.

so we're looking back to that part of God's grace. Then he goes on verse 12. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you and the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. Therefore preparing your minds for action and being sober minded set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[36 : 27] What's he talking about there? Do you think? What's the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Do we have that now? No. No. We don't have that grace. Yes and no. No. What this is doing is like teasing apart for our benefit to sustain us in the here and now with the already and the not yet.

We're familiar with the already and the not yet like theological handles. right? So already we in our time and place have Jesus as a thing, a person we can look back to and say God fulfilled his promise.

We have all these amazing scriptures that shed so much light on the meaning of what Jesus did as we've been talking about.

But, and, we're told that we should be sober-minded now. We should be prepared for action now.

[37 : 54] What that means, I mean, part of what that means is that we think rightly about where we are right now on the timeline, setting our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In other words, when he comes back. When he comes back. When he comes back. Because, before we end today, I'm going to just lay on you the magnitude of grace.

Like, it's too good to be true. People say that, right? But, it almost, it almost is so good that there's that part in my heart, maybe in yours too, and you're like, that just, it just can't be.

It just can't. Because we have our experience in this life where we just get hammered and let down and our guards up and it ought to be up because we're living in the wilderness period.

And this is my point. As Christians, it's super important that we are self-aware that we are in our wilderness season.

[39 : 23] Christians talk about this in a lot of different ways. They call themselves pilgrims. This isn't our home. We must keep our eyes on our future hope.

And with regard to grace, we must encourage our own hearts with God's promise of what's coming.

Let's go back to our definition of grace. Mercy wipes out our debt. But grace is unmerited favor. Goodness.

And to be honest, I mean, a lot of Christians debate, right, how much of this do we have in the here and now. And some people will say, well, you just don't have it because you're not drinking in the Holy Spirit enough and that's fair enough.

Like, I don't know that there's any Christian you could come to and say, oh, you're being miserable? It's because you're not submitting to the Holy Spirit enough. You'd have way more joy. Who could say, no, that's not me?

[40 : 43] You know, of course. But the description of what's coming, none of us are, we're not there yet.

And this may just seem so obvious, but here's another thing I want to say. It seems to me as I observe all of us walking along together as Christians, the big obvious things, it's like, yeah, that's what we believe, that's orthodox, whatever.

And then it's like, boom, we're like focused on some problem God doesn't give us the answer to, and we're just like, let's just spend all our time worrying about that, or let's chase after this thing of the world that promises us happiness.

And, you know, it's, it's, these big truths, they're so big, and they're so grand, it's like, it's hard to hold on to.

And so, I just want to say, let's not forget where we are on the timeline of redemption, and that that applies to how God's dispensing grace.

[41 : 59] It strikes me that a lot of the metaphors that the New Testament uses is about farming, gardening, sowing seeds, watering it, the dog gives the growth, it. And I, I think a lot of times we're not patient the way farmers are, where we scatter seed and go to sleep, and it's up to God whether he's going to give that growth, and we know it's not going to receive its fullness until that grace that was revealed at the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I know, to your point, a lot of people have been burned out in ministry. It's like, I've been preaching for 10 years, and my congregation hasn't grown at all, and God must have failed.

But I think across New Testament, the measure of success is faithfulness. Are you being faithful when God has given you now? And God hasn't promised that over-realized eschatology.

You're going to experience all the blessings, and you're not going to reap all now. You're going to have to wait until that day. So, I'm not a farmer, I'm not a gardener, but I know Paul uses the sowing the seeds all over the place.

It seems like that's what he wants us to realize what you're saying. You're not going to experience it all now. Your point is to sow seeds, let God do the rest. Yeah, and you know, like the worst-case scenario thinker in me, like whenever, like so long as what you're saying accounts for, you could get on your face before God and say, I've got nothing, I just have to receive, and I'm going to repent, I'm going to be in a pattern of repentance, I'm going to strive to love you and love other people, and you could be dealt eye cancer, you could be, like let's, I'm a worst-case scenario guy, like I don't, anyone else in here are a worst-case scenario thinker, like basically test your philosophy against the worst-case scenario, right, which is does that hold up, and I think it does, right, like because sometimes, because God's free, sometimes, like for example,

[44 : 15] I'm the most cynical person, this isn't good, I'm just being honest for a second, I'm a cynical person that I trust God, but I'm like probably I'm going to get, it's going to be terrible, but God's given me five children, you guys know, many of you know many of them, beyond my wildest hopes would all of them be professing faith in Christ, okay, all of them are professing faith in Christ, beyond my, like, it's, what if they weren't, what if, I mean, I have friends whose children, friends that were just in my circles, and their children hate God, I don't mean they're just neutral, I mean, they hate God, they're writing stuff online, they hate their parents, and my philosophy has to be work for that scenario too, which is why this promise of future grace, that's a loaded term,

I don't mean it loaded, I mean literally the grace that's coming that's not here yet, is so important, I think, so that when we encounter people who are suffering worse than us, who are believers, we can encourage their faith, and it's not trite, and it's not trivial, the world's going to come along, and we're like, yeah, just hold on, in a short while, all this is going to be over, and the world's going to be like, they've got the this is all there is goggles on, and we look like idiots, we look like fools, and as Paul says, if Jesus is not raised, we are idiots and fools, right, but we know we're on the right track if even our own leaders, apostles, are telling us our day-to-day hope ought to make us look like fools for what we're trusting in that's coming, and maybe this is just over simple, like maybe

I struggle with this more than you guys do, but I struggle with that, I struggle with trusting in what's coming, and with actually recognizing where I am on the timeline, and setting my actual expectations for tomorrow morning when I wake up, like this is another day in the wilderness, God's with me, he's given me things to sustain me, but, I mean, we're all going to die, I mean, we talked about this last week, like, the wrath, it's, we're not in heaven yet, let's put it that way, no one disputes that, right, I mean, we're not home yet, obvious, but I think important, okay, magnitude of grace, the magnitude of grace, so, we got ten minutes, and really what my hope is for our hour, is that you leave encouraged, and your faith is encouraged, and my faith is encouraged, and so,

I'm going to put some things in my own words, and then I'm going to read some scriptures, and then I hear your thoughts, and we'll close, Christians are forgiven of all sins, past, present, and future, Christians are counted as clean, holy, and righteous before God, Christians are restored to fellowship with God, and we are adopted as sons and daughters, co-heirs with Christ, mysteriously looking forward to an inheritance that the scriptures themselves say are beyond the imagination of what we can even dream up.

Christians are invited into the glory of God, and as we talked about last week, mysteriously Christians are invited to be partakers of the divine nature.

[49 : 26] I backed this up with scripture last time, I'm not doing that now. We have new bodies coming, all of this is going to last forever and ever, and all of this is secured by God himself because he's freely giving the grace, and he's the guarantor of that grace.

it's the flip side of us not being able to earn it. Have you thought about these passages that vex us so much about God choosing?

The other side of that coin is that you can't earn it. You cannot earn it, but God can give it and secure it, not by you earning it.

how amazing is that? Because if it ends up depending on you earning it, it's in jeopardy.

But we test our inferences against the scriptures. Now I'm going to read a few passages for you. 1 Corinthians 2.9 No eye has seen nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has planned for those who love him.

[50 : 57] Blessed is the man who preserves under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. Jesus speaking in John, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand.

And the prophet Isaiah, for behold, I will create new heavens and new earth and the former things will not even be remembered nor will they come to mind.

All of this is undeserved favor. All of this is secured by sovereign God who's setting his love and favor and forgiveness on us.

And so how do we respond to this? You know, maybe we just spend a couple minutes talking about that and then we'll close. How do we respond and how do we maybe not?

[52 : 34] how do we avoid how do we not respond? Thoughts? tell as many people as you can about it, about this wonderful news.

How do you guide it? That's it. don't respond by saying, well, of course God is going to be merciful.

That's his job. He's a gracious God. Taking it for granted. But take that context in mind always. This is what I truly deserve. This is what I be given. This is all grace.

So, remembering that we were once far off, strangers and exiles without hope, without the promise, but we even brought near by the crisis. So, keeping that context to mind.

As a young person brought up in a loving family, I took it for granted and I thought I was pretty good.

[53 : 49] As an older person, I look back, so that's one thing not to do, not to take it for granted. Now, as an older person, I look back and I think of all my failures.

Oh, I should have done this. I could have done that. And then God reminds me of his grace. That's why I need Jesus and I'm secure in him and loved in him.

Commit yourself to a lifestyle of giving thanks for his grace. Set a goal twice a day, morning and night, to give thanks. And remind yourself that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

And if you have faith, no matter how weak it is, that verse applies to you. I think as a reminder that grace is always available.

I think in Hebrews it says, let us draw near, I don't obtain mercy, I do me in favor in time of need. I think sometimes we forget it is always available, actually.

[55 : 06] it's not Jesus said, how many times should you give your brother? There's something to mere morals, right? 70 times 7. So how many times is God willing to give grace even when we own them?

It's a lot more. I think grace is always available from God. I say from God in the sense that there's a verse in Jonah, when he was in the belly of the whale, saying, those who cling to worthless idols, forsake the grace that could be theirs.

But I, I think it says, will look to your temple and proclaim salvation amongst God. And sometimes in the middle of our trials, I think we will look to other things for grace, but that verse reminds us that grace is always available and especially from God.

And when we don't look to God, we forsake the grace that the verse is. It's always available to us. This grace is like a treasure where someone sold all you have to buy the field where you can find this ultimate treasure of Christ.

And it's really, it's a treasure that should be more precious to us than all the riches, all the money in our 401k account. This grace is ultimately precious in our treasure for every Christian to treat it as such.

[56 : 42] And not take it for granted. I can't take it for granted not when our elder, our past elder, walked away from the faith, who was baptized, who played the drums in front of us, and now he's gone.

That scares me to death. So, that scares me to no end. Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name.

John, I think it's so interesting how things get back to gratitude.

It's like, how do we respond? Well, I think it's obvious, but you never encounter a brother or sister and they're kind of off the rails and it's easier to see in other people than yourself, of course.

you don't hear thankfulness, you hear bitterness, maybe. And, it's just so interesting you go back to Romans 1 and it's acknowledge God as God, and for us, that means receiving Jesus, that means setting our, it means acknowledging that God is holy and we're not, and he's provided a savior and we receive him and then we give thanks.

[58 : 05] It's not complicated, it's just hard. It's, it's, and I find it so, you know, the older I get, the gratitude being the key to a joyous life while we're in the wilderness journey fueled by this undeserved grace, the undeserved favor of God is what we have to keep pointing each other back to and encouraging each other.

And I loved what someone said too, where every day is a new day to go and recalibrate and go receive, like, don't stay away from God because you had a terrible week and you did a whole bunch of terrible stuff.

And it's like, well, maybe I'm not even a Christian now. Whoa, well, that's how you got in the door in the first place. Grace is still grace. It's not like after you've been a Christian for five years, now it's the you show plus grace.

grace. And there's some mystery there. We can look to scriptures and say, hey, if you're saying that you're tasting the grace and there's no evidence in your life, then that should be a pause time.

But it doesn't change that you're saved by grace all the time. And to me, I find that so encouraging because someone said it, the doors always open and we have an enemy who wants us to paralyze us and sideline us for going back to that grace to fuel our submissiveness to God and our thankfulness.

[59 : 58] Go ahead, Raul. For me, it's the hard part is when is God doing everything and when is it monergism, when is it that I can't?

When exactly do I get my act together under the hospices of the Bible? Lord and my brothers in my church where it's me working and then I'll just stop because I don't want it to be just me, I want it to be God.

But it ends up looking like it's me and God and if it's that then I can't do this. It's just so confusing to me. My whole Christian walk has been like that.

Yep. Let's pray about that because I feel that and we got to close and that could be, that's a whole other thing. But let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do pray that you would bolster our faith and that Holy Spirit, we pray that you would continue to show us Jesus and show us our ongoing need for Jesus and help us to repent and turn away from evil and turn away from our self sufficiency and our autonomy and turn to you with open hands and receive our salvation.

And Father, we do pray that you would help us to not make peace with our sin, that we would strive to please you with our lives, that we would fight the fight of faith and pray that everyone here would be, that we would all be encouraging each other towards the finish line and we would run the race well.

[61 : 49] And we do also pray, Father, for the, for our witness to these things. So we thank you for your grace and we thank you for your undeserved forgiveness and favor on us.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.