

Why God Gives His Grace

by Alan Martin

This sermon delves into the relationship between grace and faith, emphasizing the fundamental principles of God's grace and the purpose behind why God gives us grace. It explores the concept that God's grace is not solely for our benefit but to display His holiness through our transformed lives, leading us to walk in holiness and good works to bring glory to God's name. The message highlights the importance of understanding that God's grace is intended to make us a new creation, reflecting His holiness and righteousness to the world.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 2:10, Ezekiel 36:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 Peter 1:15, Matthew 5:16, Romans 6:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Hebrews 12:14, James 2:17

Topics: "Grace", "Transformation through Faith"

Description

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Transcript

Going over some of the fundamentals of the faith, the rudimentary principles, because that's what the writer of Hebrews said, that when we have come to a place, we're not making the spiritual progress that we can make when we ought to be teachers by now, but we're not because we've grown dull of hearing. The scripture said we need someone to go back and teach what are the rudimentary principles of God's word all over again. So, we've been talking about faith, the hearing of faith, and mixing what we hear with faith, just very rudimentary principles.

Today, I want to talk about the relationship of grace and faith, because grace is so fundamental to our understanding of how to grow up in this great salvation that we've been given in Christ. So, let's start and take a look at the grace of God, and I know we have a basic understanding of this, but I can tell you that it was very late in my Christian life that I discovered how the prophets of the Lord spoke of the grace that was coming to us in a way, I never heard growing up in the church all my life, and I have rarely ever heard anyone speak about the aspect of grace that I want to share with you today right from the scripture. I wonder why that is.

I can't explain that, but I hope you'll listen very attentively to see a new revelation or a greater revelation of the grace of God than we may have received before. Let's start in one of the most familiar passages, Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith, and this salvation not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

So, most believers know how we are saved. You know that. If I were to ask you, most of you could tell me we are saved by grace through faith.

It's not by our works. We know that salvation is a gift of God. No one earns it.

We know the how. We know how God saves us. Salvation is a gift, and it is received through faith.

But sadly, and here's what concerns me, too few believers know why we're saved. And that concerns me. You know, how would you answer this? Why are we saved? Why does God give us grace? How would you answer? I think most of us would answer because God loves us.

John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. We understand that God gives us grace because He loves us. But do you realize that Paul actually explained why God gives grace in the same passage that we first read in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9? Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, Paul said, for it is by grace you are saved through faith, and it's not of yourselves, it's not of works, it is a gift of God so that no one should boast.

But then in verse 10, he explains why. Two slides ahead, all the way to verse 10, Ruth. For we are God's workmanship, or His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Back up, let Ruth and I get on the same page real quick, because I want you to follow this back up, Ruth, where you're ahead of me, okay? Back up a slide. Keep back one more time, one more. There you go.

All right. Now, there should be a verse 10, the next one, advanced one, and we'll be together. Okay.

Paul understood both the how and the why that God saves us. Verse 8 and 9 explains that we're saved by grace through faith. That's the how.

Verse 10 explains the why. Now, let's look at verse 10 together. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Let's focus on this a little bit. We are God's handiwork. Some of your versions say we're His workmanship.

We are a thing that God has made for a purpose, for the purpose of good works. That is why we are given grace. And there is a passage that clearly explains what this handiwork of God is, what God makes of a person that He gives grace to.

And that's what I want you to see. And I hope you're really paying attention because I was never shown this growing up in the church. I didn't see this for many years and it's been right there in the scriptures all along the reason that God gives His grace.

And we're going to go to the prophet Ezekiel. And Peter said this, that we would do well to pay attention to the prophets because they're like a light shining in a dark place. And the prophet spoke of the grace that

was coming to us.

And can I encourage you to do something? I would get your understanding of grace from the prophets and not theologians. Go to the prophet in the scripture because they speak about the grace of God. And it's a different emphasis than I have often heard in theological discussions.

Let's see what the prophet Ezekiel spoke about when he talked about the grace of God and why God's giving this grace and what God does in creating this workmanship of His and why He creates it. Ezekiel chapter 36. Again, the word of the Lord came to me.

Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols.

So I dispersed them among the nations and they were scattered throughout the countries. And I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations, they profaned my holy name.

And to profane would be like dragging His name in the mud. They cheapened it. They removed the honor from it.

They made it common, just like a common idol. There's nothing special about it. For it was said of them, when they were scattered among all the various nations, it was said of them, these are the Lord's people.

And yet they had to leave His land. And look what the Lord says. I had concern for my holy name.

I want you to understand that's the major reason why God gives grace. God's concern for His own holy name. Look what He says.

I had concern for my holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone. Therefore, say to the Israelites, this is what the Sovereign Lord says. It is not for your sake.

I'm not giving you grace for your sake. This is not for you. It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things.

But for the sake of my holy name, which you profaned among the nations where you have gone. I never heard that growing up in church. No one ever explained to me that the reason God gives grace was not for the people, but for His own holy name's sake.

No one ever told me that. I can't believe it took me so many years to see it and understand it in the Scriptures. But for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone, I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them.

And then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. So why does God give grace? He states it very clearly. It's because of His own holy name that His people were profaning by their continual disobedience.

So He decided, I'm going to act for my own sake, for the sake of my great name, and I am going to do something in my people that will prove I am holy through them before the eyes of the nations, something

the nations can see. The nations will see who I really am by what I'm going to do in my people. And this is the grace that He's about to describe.

This is the grace that is God's handiwork, okay? Ezekiel is then going to describe God's handiwork, His own creation, which He's making to show Himself holy to the world. We are God's workmanship. We are this thing that He Himself must do that you or I could never do.

We could never do this to ourself. We could never cause ourself to be this way. So God Himself is going to do it.

That's why it's grace. And the reason He's going to do it is for the sake of His own holy name. Now let's look at what He Himself says He's going to do.

For I will take you out of the nations, and I will gather you from all the countries you've been scattered into, in other words, and bring you back into your own land. And I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. And I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and to be careful to keep my laws.

Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors, and you will be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you from all your uncleanness. Then you will remember your evil ways and your wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices.

Then He reemphasizes again, I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign Lord. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, people of Israel. So do you see the workmanship that God says He's gonna do? He will bring us back.

He grants repentance. He draws men back to Himself. He has to cleanse us from our impurities.

He has to take away our own stony, unresponsive heart and put in us a new heart and a new spirit. He has to remove our idolatry from us. He does it.

He does this work. He has to put His Spirit in us and compel us and move us to walk in His ways because the people of the first covenant profane His name by their character and conduct. So He says, I'm going to do something.

I'm going to make a handiwork in Christ Jesus. I'm going to create a people that will show the holiness of my name. A people who will be like me.

A people who will, when the world sees them, when the nation sees them, they will see that I am holy because this people, I will be a father to. They'll be my people and I'll be their God, but their lives will bring honor to my name. That's why God gives grace.

Now there's no more slides. That's all. I wanted to take the slide up to this point and I want you to hear my heart because I don't even know where I'm going to go.

But here's what I do know. That when grace is not understood to be for the sake of the Lord's holy name and it's turned into man's benefit, you have turned it upside down and missed its original purpose

altogether. Let me make something very clear.

There are those who seek to express and who think they're bringing glory to Jesus Christ. And I understand them to be very sincere, but I'm very troubled by something. When they turn grace into Jesus is the only one perfect and God gives his perfect righteousness to us so that it doesn't depend at all on what we do.

God considers us perfect. When God looks at us, we are given the righteousness of Christ Jesus. And that just brings wonderful glory to Jesus Christ because it's no longer about us.

It's all about him. And they've even come up with the phrase, I'm just resting in the finished work of Christ. I want you to imagine me in my home and I come with a pretty bad attitude and I'm pretty ugly and mean and insensitive and I make some snide comments to my wife and I tell her, don't worry, sweetie.

I am resting in the finished work of Christ. God sees me as perfect. It's really not about me.

It doesn't really matter what I do. I am perfectly accepted in Christ and there's no condemnation for me because God loves me just the way I am because of Jesus. Think that's impressive to her? Or do you think she would be more impressed by me being so convicted of my sin that I brought shame and dishonor to the name of the Lord, that I humbled myself? And I said, please forgive me.

That dishonored you. That dishonored my Lord and that brought him shame and reproach. And I experienced something that very few people seem to understand.

I experienced a godly sorrow. Paul calls it the sorrow according to God. The whole world is sorry when the consequences come upon them for the actions that they've done.

They all feel bad when their marriages fall apart and their friendships fall apart and the strife and stains gum in their life. They're all sorry. But Paul calls that worldly sorrow and worldly sorrow leads to death.

The sorrow that's according to God is a sorrow that is more conscience of how our actions have brought reproach and shame to the name of the Lord than the consequences for us. And it grips us to a depth. It grips us to a depth and produces in us a brokenness and a contriteness and a longing to be changed.

That is godly sorrow. And so too many of us, and I, for my own, speaking of myself, for my own life too long, failed to understand that the reason God has saved me, the reason God gave me grace in Christ Jesus was to show the holiness of my God to everyone who watches my life. That's why he gives me grace.

It's not just to get me to heaven. It's not just to forgive me of my sins. I do rest in the finished work of Christ, but this is the finished work.

Having made one offering for sin, he sat down. He finished making atonement. And that atonement is there.

It's covered the sins of the whole world. He finished reconciling men to God. He finished crushing the powers of darkness.

He finished breaking the power of sin. He finished making me free. I rest in that so that if I sin, he is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to purify me from all righteousness.

And I rest in that, but I run to his finishing work. I rest in what he has finished, and I run with endurance the race marked out for me, and I look away unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of my faith. What is the finishing work of Christ? You know what the finishing work of Christ? It's to finish conforming me to his image and likeness.

It's to make me like Jesus Christ so that God's holiness can be put on display before my wife, before my children, before my grandchildren, before my family, before my friends. It's that God might show himself holy through me. That's why the scripture says, be holy because I am holy.

And it says, in all your conduct, be holy. This is why Jesus said, let your light shine before men that they may see what? Your good works. And what do they do, Rudy, when they see your good works? They glorify your Father in heaven.

The word for good here is not agathos in the Greek, it's kalos. It means attractive. They see the holiness of God in your life.

They see the righteousness that the powerful grace of God is producing in our lives, and they are attracted to the beauty they see. And they glorify God. In other words, they recognize this is God's work.

God has done a work in this person because it's by our fruit we are known. We're told that we recognize false prophets by their fruit. By their fruit, you shall know them.

What kind of fruit are we showing the world? Are we showing them the fruit of holiness? Do they see the fruit of the Spirit? Do they see a person in every situation he's gonna respond with one of these, love, joy, faith, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control? Is that what they'll see? Do they see the holiness of God, or do they see the fallen corruption of man? What are you showing the world? That you're related to your great, great, great, great, great grandfather, Adam, who fell into sin? Or that you're born again? Now you've been born from above, and that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. And now you're able to walk in all the righteousness of the law, because what the law could not do, weak as it was to the flesh, God did in sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin, and he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirements of God might be fully fulfilled in us who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And then we demonstrate that greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world, and that Christ in me, the genuine grace of God produces the holiness of God in all my character and my conduct.

And the will of God from the very beginning is fulfilled. You remember why God made man? In the very beginning, it was the last thing he did, wasn't it, before he rested. What was the last thing he did? He said, let us make man in our own image and likeness.

You see why he gives grace? The people of the first covenant marred his image, profaned his image, corrupted his image. And now those that God has called in Christ, he has predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son because God wants to show himself holy in the eyes of the world. And it's you and I that are gonna do that.

He's gonna show himself holy by doing such a work in us than they can see who he is really like. You know, you know what Jesus said? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Now we're supposed to be imitators of Christ.

So don't you think it should work this way? Those who saw Jesus saw the Father. Those who see us, who should they see? They should see Jesus. They shouldn't see Adam.

They shouldn't see King David. They shouldn't see Peter denying the Lord. They should see Jesus.

That's why we are given grace. And let me encourage you something. If you will grasp this as an understanding that the reason God gives us grace, it will bring the entire rest of the New Testament together.

Suddenly you'll understand what Paul means by a holy calling. What's our holy calling? Our holy calling is to demonstrate that God is holy by the holiness we walk in. That's our holy calling.

This is our opportunity. It's our high calling. It's the number one concern of God that he have a people who manifest his holiness to the world.

And it's everywhere in the New Testament, even in the Lord's Prayer. Most of you, if we started to quote the Lord's Prayer, we could quote it together. How does it start? Our Father who art in heaven.

What's the next thing? Hallowed. You know what hallowed mean? Made holy. May your name be made holy.

You think Jesus understood the will of his Father? Jesus understood why he brought the grace of God to the earth. To make the holiness of his Father known. And that's who he calls to himself.

If you think he was interested in just dragging a bunch of dirty, crummy people to heaven, you have missed the point. He is willing to forgive all manner of sin. But he forgives sin and cleanses men from impurity and gives them a new heart and puts his spirit in them to make them holy.

Holy. That's why the Bible calls us saints. Did you realize that the word saint really means holy one? We are to be the holy ones.

And holy means set apart. We're to be the ones that are not like the world. We're not like other religions.

Especially this way. We are not hypocrites. We don't say one thing and do another.

We don't claim to have Jesus Christ living in us and then act like we have no power to resist just doing dumb things. That's hypocrites. And those people who live that way will find out they never knew the Lord.

That's what he means. You just say he's Lord, but you don't know him. How can you know the Lord and know that the main reason he has given us grace is to show himself holy to the world and not walk in holiness? Does it make sense now why the writer of Hebrews says, without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

No one. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. Because without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

We are to be built up in our holy calling. And we are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in putting to death everything that belongs to the old nature. All the practices of the body.

All of our members which are upon the earth. We are to be transformed. Because the scripture says we are being renewed in knowledge and the image of our creator in true righteousness and holiness.

True righteousness and holiness is not the righteousness that God just sees me as righteous. No, it's a righteousness that my neighbor can see. You see, what happens, so many theologians and so many pastors can fall into this same trap to wanna make sure you know that God sees you as righteous.

You're okay. God sees you as righteous because of his grace. But when are we going to wake up to the fact that the reason God forgave us, the reason God made atonement, the reason he does such a dynamic work is not just so that we can appear right before him, so that he can appear holy before the world.

That's the finish. That's why we pursue sanctification. That's why Paul talked about, therefore, having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every filthiness of body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Perfecting holiness, it's not about earning salvation. It's not so that we can go to heaven. It's so that we might be for the praise of his glory.

Paul adds, for the praise of his glorious grace. You know what brings praise and glory to the grace of Christ? The dynamic change that grace produces in the lives of those who genuinely experience it. Not grace is cheapened.

Let me say this very carefully. And there's such a passion in me. It is often boiled out in such an anger.

I still feel the anger, but I wanna be careful. It angers me that all men seem to be concerned about that God sees us as righteous, and no one has the same concern that he be seen as holy. That's imbalanced.

If you understand that it is by the grace of Christ, and it is the gift of Christ, and it's only the work of Christ, and you think you're giving glory to Christ, just make sure that glory includes your present conduct. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things pass away, and all things become new.

Because you know what's God doing? What happened as a result of Adam's fall? It says, through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners. So also, through the obedience of the one man, many will be made righteous. God is creating a new people of the new covenant, a new race, no longer born of Adam, born of Christ.

And the fruit of Christ in us is the holiness of God. That's what it is. And I am tired of men wanting to do nothing but comfort others by telling them, you're okay, you're okay, you're okay.

It's time for our lives to bring honor and glory to God our Father. This is why Paul would pray. Listen to this prayer.

Listen to this. I pray that God give you the spirit, the full spirit. He would make you to know the knowledge of his will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding in order that you may walk worthy of the Lord.

Worthy. What does he mean worthy? Here's what I'll say on the worthy side. Worthy is that word that comes from the access of the scales, that point of access.

You've seen where the two scales balance. Here's where it seems to me the theological emphasis has been too long. We are right in God's eye.

We are right in God's eye. God sees you as Christ. God sees you as forgiven.

It's all about Christ. And his name is up here dangling by your uncontrolled speech and your outburst of anger and your depression and your lack of being a consistent godly witness at home, at work, in your neighborhood every day consistently, a new creation in Christ. Worthy is when the two balance out where you are both right by the gift of God's grace because God made atonement himself.

He did it. You didn't. None of us can do it.

He circumcised our hearts. It's not done by the hands of man. The law couldn't do it and we couldn't do it by the works of the law.

So it took God himself doing it. He made the workmanship, but the reason he made the workmanship is so that the world would see how great a workman he is. And if those two aren't equal, we're not living worthy of the calling we've received.

You understand? Is that clear? I can't explain it all, but I could go from passage to passage to passage to every book of the New Testament. I could show you how it fits together to this purpose. We are to live as saints.

We're called to be saints. And anything that would cause God's name to be blotted, to be impugned, to be degraded is to be put out of our lives by his help. That's why he put his spirit in us.

That's why he broke the power of sin. That's why we have a new heart. That's why his laws are now written on our hearts and on our minds.

And he actually enables us to be a people who love him with all of our heart, who obey him with all of our heart, and who actually do what he calls us to do joyfully, to show the world how blessed it is to have him as our father, and to show the world how holy he is and how righteous he is, and to let the world taste and see that he is good by the fruit of holiness in our own lives. Can we understand enough? We'll talk about this more. I could spend a long time in the next few weeks about this, but just let me summarize again.

And look at me, look up here at me. I don't want you to hear too long. I just want to make sure in your eyes that you're at least trying to grasp this.

Salvation is a gift. None of us could earn it. It's not by the works of the law.

God had to do it. Before even we even existed, God had planned that he would rescue the world by his son. He had that plan from the very beginning.

And God accomplished salvation between him and his son alone. He provided the atonement. He provided the necessary shedding of blood of his son.

He provided the forgiveness of our sins. He's the one that had to circumcise our hearts. He's the one who provides his spirit.

He provides all the work. We are his workmanship. Workmanship.

And the reason he created us is to be zealous for good works. The good works that men see and do what? Glorify the father in heaven. See, that's receiving his grace properly with understanding.

And it's those who receive it in this way, they are really the ones that God has called. You ever wonder what it means, therefore be all the eager to make your calling and election sure? Hmm, how is it possible to make your calling and election sure? If you are literally fulfilling the reason you were called, you got it, right? You're walking in holiness. You're bringing him glory and honor through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You're walking by the Holy Spirit. You're counting yourself dead to sin and alive unto God. You're living in resurrection power so that you can walk in newness of life.

You are in Christ Jesus, a new creation. Old things are passed away. All things have become new.

Yep, you're one of the chosen ones. You're living in the calling that God has called you. You can be sure you're gonna hear when you stand at the pearly gates, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

You won't hear, Lord, Lord, depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you. You won't hear.

You won't be shocked. But those that are hoping to get into heaven by claiming that Christ has done it all and it's not about us and it's not about our works. You know, they're only speaking of the first part.

They're only speaking of the gift aspect. There's a responsibility that comes with the gift. We were bought with a price.

Therefore, we are to honor God with our bodies. That's the full gospel. And it's the gospel that I believe as your pastor.

It's just like if you would be embarrassed, right? Wouldn't you be embarrassed if suddenly you had to read in the newspaper that I got caught in some heinous act with some other woman or doing something dirty, pilfering the church money? Wouldn't you be embarrassed? Would you look at the paper and read that? How do you think God feels when you bear his name and you walk in the corrupt ugliness of your flesh in front of your family members or your coworkers? You think it pleases him anymore that you do that to the family name? You're members of University of Florida Baptist Church. May every one of us here walk in holiness. May you give the correct and right representation of Jesus Christ everywhere you go every single day.

That's our calling. That's how we're to walk. That's the purpose of preaching and teaching and fellowship and exhortation.

We are on a mission. And it is the gift of grace that put us on that mission. And that mission is stated by God to show himself holy to the world.

Got it?

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