

The Abundance of God's Grace

by Gisela Yohannan

To bring honor to the name of Jesus, we need to live a life worthy of our calling and depend on God's Grace, which is the love and favor of God toward human beings.

Duration: 50:58

Scripture: Exodus 34:6, Romans 3:24, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9, Titus 2:11, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "God's Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor shares a story about a missionary who persecuted Christians, including a pastor. However, when the missionary broke his leg and needed a blood transfusion, the pastor showed him grace by collecting money for his operation and donating blood. This act of grace led the missionary to understand and receive Christ. The pastor emphasizes that God chooses to give to us and that even our ability to bear fruit and give comes through grace. The pastor also highlights the importance of living sacrificially and honoring Jesus in our lives, as many Christians today live too closely to the world, diminishing the honor of Christ.

Transcript

Well, we have been talking now for two sessions about Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians. At the end of his prayer he's saying the reason why he's praying that they would walk worthy of their calling and that God would fulfill through them all the things that God desires and they desire and that their faith should be answered by God's prayer that they will have such a faith. He says the reason I'm praying this is that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, we will look what that means that the name of our Lord Jesus be glorified. In the time of Paul and the Thessalonian Christians, Christianity was not a respected religion. In fact, the Jews regarded Jesus as a false messiah, as a deceiver and a blasphemer.

And Jewish Christians were considered traitors of God's covenant and traitors of Israel in the law of Moses. Therefore, Jesus was spoken of with contempt and Christians were despised and persecuted. That was from the Jewish side.

Now, at the time the Roman Empire was in power and in the Roman Empire, Christianity was an outlawed religion. It was not recognized. Christians were watched and looked at with suspicion and Emperor Nero

and other emperors, they severely persecuted the Christians.

Many Christians were imprisoned and tortured and died as martyrs. And when you look at the Colosseum that's still standing there in Rome, you can imagine what these Christians suffered. In this situation, the Apostle Paul was saying, I pray for you to walk worthy and that your faith be answered with power that the name of Jesus will be honored in such a world.

Now, what could honor bring honor to the name of Jesus only if these Christians would live a life worthy of their calling and genuinely represent the Lord Jesus. That people could see Christ's love and hope and holiness and compassion and humility as part of the character of Christians. Then people, when they will meet the Christians, they will encounter the real Jesus and this will bring honor to God.

Now, when we look in our culture, the name of the Lord is getting a really bad press. Think about how many Christian leaders haven't represented Jesus well. And sadly, so many tragic failures of pastors and priests and Christian leaders, their scandals and affairs and child molestation, dishonesty and fake miracles and all these different things is put on TV and the news media.

We have a lot of fake Christianity that has nothing to do with the Christianity of the New Testament. Much of the Bible teaching is self-centered and void of sacrifice and the cross. And the testimony of many Christians is very weak because they live as close to the world as possible.

And then Jesus can't be seen in our marriages, in our families, in our lives. Now, all of this has really diminished the honor of the Lord Jesus in our generation. And when you watch the news, you almost get tired to see one more story of a pastor or a Christian leader that dishonored Christ's name.

And if you see any of these nightly comedy shows, often Jesus is the subject of their jokes and everything else that is holy. And in the movies, when you watch movies, how is a pastor, a priest portrayed? Look at it. Very few are portrayed as wonderful people that try to help humanity.

Very often, they are portrayed as someone who uses the office of a pastor or a priest to cover up a sinful life or crime or fake miracles. So Jesus' name has suffered greatly in our generation. And people have a hard time to believe in Jesus because of the sad testimony of Christ's followers.

And you hear that phrase often, you know, when you talk about someone, wouldn't you want to accept Christ? They will say, well, I know a Christian at my office. If she's a Christian, I don't want to be one. Just imagine if the courts and the media could not find one thing wrong to accuse Christians of.

If they could only report good things, the result would be praise to God and honor for the name of Jesus and respect for Christianity. But they find so many wrong things. Now, God is really concerned about his name in our generation.

Why is that? Acts 4.12, and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. Romans 10.13, whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. It's the only name people can find salvation.

And God's name has gotten such a bad press that people don't want to call upon him. So how can we as believers bring honor back to the name of Jesus? I think it's the same challenge, just a different one, like in the time of the Thessalonians. We, you, your church can change the way think about Christ in your community.

It's in your hands by living a life worthy of your calling. Now, sometimes we say it's very hard, but God has provided something we need in living a life that exalts Jesus. And Paul is telling the Colossians, the Thessalonians, and to us what that is.

He says, in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's grace we need. So what is this grace of God and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Our kids, you know, they say grace at the dinner table.

God is great. God is good. Thank you for this food.

This is not the grace I'm talking about. Now Webster's Dictionary says, grace is the love and favor of God toward human beings. That is right.

But the Bible talks about in a higher level of grace. It says not only it's the favor of God is unmerited favor. We didn't deserve it.

We messed up so bad. We deserve punishment. But instead, we get forgiveness a hug and the ice cream cone.

I remember a story from one of our pastors on the mission field. He was persecuting the Christians and especially the pastor. He got him beat up and was as mean as possible to him.

But one day this man broke his leg and he was taken to the hospital. He needed an operation and he didn't have enough blood. He needed a blood transfusion.

And no one was helping him. No one was giving it to him. Our pastor went and collected money to help pay for the operation.

And then he went to the hospital and donated blood for this man. And he was saying, how can you do that for me? Of course, the story ends with this man understanding the grace of God and the love of God. And he received Christ unmerited favor.

He didn't deserve it. But our pastor extended it to him. The Bible says we have a God of grace.

When Moses wanted to get to know God closer and see him, God said to him, I will pronounce my name before you. And what he really meant, I want to tell you my heart. I want to tell you who I am, my nature.

And so it says in Exodus 34, 6, when Moses went up the mountain, God came and he was able to see his back, not his face, because no human being can look at his face and live. You have to understand in the old covenant, the new covenant, our Lord Jesus came and we could see his face. Then the Lord passed by in front of him, of Moses, and proclaimed his name.

And he said, the Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth. He said, my name, part of my name is gracious, compassionate and gracious. Nehemiah 9, 17 says, but though are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate.

First Peter 5 says that we have a God of all grace. What does that mean? All grace. Everything that's grace is in him.

Nothing is missing. You know, when you look at the deities people worship in different parts of the world, they are unpredictable. Many are gods of vengeance and bloodthirsty.

One day they love you. Next day they kill you. You never know.

We got a God of all grace, all grace. And then what's about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, when Jesus came to this earth, he came as a baby. His manger was not surrounded by a sick black cloud or consuming fire, thunder, lightning, a very loud trumpet sound, violent earthquake and smoke like a furnace, like we read in Exodus 19, 16 through 18.

That's when the Israelites encountered God on Mount Sinai. They got so scared. They were saying, Moses, you go and talk to God.

We can't endure this. We are so afraid. Jesus came showing us his full grace when he was laying there in the manger.

Mary and Joseph didn't have to be afraid to pick up the baby Jesus, and if they had a wrong thought, get zapped and die. And the shepherds and the wise men didn't have to run for their lives. John writes in John 1, 14, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, full of grace and truth.

And in verse 16, for of his fullness we have all received in grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ, verse 17.

And Hebrews 2, 9, that by the grace of God he, that means Jesus, might taste death for everyone. Second Corinthians 8, 9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that you through his poverty may become rich. And many scriptures tell us that all of us receive God's grace in Jesus as a gift.

Now we still talk about how to honor God's name, and we said we need God's grace. So when we look in the scripture, what all is available to us through grace? So that the name of the Lord may be honored through us. I started looking it up, what all comes to us through grace.

And I don't think I would need another hour just to read all the verses I have even here, so I will only pick out a few of them. Of course, salvation comes to us through grace. It is impossible for us to earn our way back to Eden.

No one succeeded so far since Adam, but still many of them are trying. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God, Ephesians 2, 8. And Paul talks about his own salvation. He said, and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love found in Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 1, 14.

He was persecuting and killing the Christians, yet the grace was more than abundant in the Lord Jesus. And then our redemption and forgiveness comes to us, how? Through grace. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, Ephesians 1, 7 and 8. Then justification comes by grace.

Righteousness, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. Access to God comes to us through grace. Let us therefore draw nearest confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need, Hebrews 4, 16.

Our calling as Christians doesn't come to us because we are better than others. It's through grace. Galatians 1, 6. Paul is writing to the Galatians, you know, I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ.

We are called by the grace of Christ. Then our hope and comfort, how does it come to us? It comes to us through grace. I remember one of our missionaries lost his 19-year-old son in a motorcycle accident.

I was at that funeral, it was heartbreaking. That mother was in a shock. It was just the most sad funeral I have been.

But how do we get grace in such a situation? Through our Lord Jesus Christ, he got enough grace to comfort and give us hope. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and the God of our Father who loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace. Then inner strength, you know, we say I can't no more.

I have made it so far, I'm so weary. Hebrews 39, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by what? By grace. Then bearing fruit in our life comes to us by grace.

The gospel which has come to you, it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth, Colossians 1.6. Then even our giving is coming through grace. You know, we often have a hard time to part with our money. You know, we think sometimes when the offering plate comes, what all I could do with this \$20 bill? You know, I could buy a pair of shoes.

I could buy a necklace or a matching purse for my outfit. 2 Corinthians 8, 1 and 3 says about these Macedonians, now brethren, Paul is writing, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia that in a great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy in their deep poverty overflowed in the belts of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord.

Now, he was collecting money for the poor Christians in Jerusalem that have gone through really hard times, and he didn't want these Macedonians to participate, but they wanted to, and he was testifying. God gave them so much grace to give even in themselves, they're so utterly poor. That reminds me to some of our sisters on the field.

I told you some stories how they do fundraising for missions, and some of them raise chickens and little vegetable gardens and making crafts, and one group of women, they decided they had one iron, you know, to iron clothes, and so they opened the ironing service. Each sister is taking turns to iron clothes, and so they make money, and they use that money to buy gospel tracts and spread the gospel. And then we have really poor sisters in the very remote places.

They don't have an iron. They don't have money. They don't have anything of these things the other sisters can do.

These ladies, they go into the forest, into the jungle, and take sticks and make brooms and selling them in the market, and so they participate in the gospel. God has given them that grace, and others, they fast and save the money that instead of eating, they save the money for spreading God's word. And I remember one of our women fellowship groups, very remote place, one of our sisters went there, and they were saying to her, one of our women fellowship leaders, they said to her, Andy, we don't have nothing.

We'd like to help with missions, support missions, but we have nothing. So she encouraged them, and the next time she visited them, they were overjoyed and said, Andy, we found a way to participate in spreading the gospel and raising money for missions. And then they said, we go out where the animals are, the cows, and we collect cow dung, and we make cow patties out of it.

We dry them, and we sell them for fuel, which people use to, for fuel for their cooking and for their, whatever they do, their fire. So think about it. These believers, these sisters, God has given them that grace to go and collect cow dung in the road and in the pasture and get it together and sell it with great joy so they can participate in spreading the gospel to the unreached villages.

Then God is giving us grace for giving thanks. You know, giving complaints is very easy. It just comes out.

But giving thanks in all situations, very difficult sometimes, but we can have God's grace to do that. For all things are for your sake that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God, 2 Corinthians 4.15. And then building up and changing someone. When a person comes to Christ, there is often many, many years God has to undo.

You know, they lived so long the wrong way. Now God has to retrain them. When Paul was saying goodbye to the Ephesians and said, I won't see you no more, he said to them in Acts 20.32, and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance.

He said, the grace of God is sufficient to build you up. In going from weakness to strength, often we say I'm not strong enough. We have grace for that in God's word as well.

God has promised, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is perfected in weakness, 2 Corinthians 12.9. There is so many, many things. I think we will be running out of time. I will just mention a few more.

Paul and Silas were sent out for ministry by the grace of God. And then being called to service, Paul was saying, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 2 Timothy 1.9. And then he talked about the ministry that he's doing church blending and writing letters and teaching. He says, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you, Ephesians 3.2. And then our conduct as Christians, our testimony, it comes to us through grace.

For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you. 2 Corinthians 1.12. I think I read you know how many Bible verses and there are so, so many more. It tells us all the things that comes to us through grace.

Witness with power is another one. In grace for everything we do, grace for suffering, after we read all these things and see what comes to us through grace, we come to the conclusion it's actually everything. Everything that God promised comes to us through grace.

Nothing we can work up for ourselves. Everything is through grace. If we want to bring honor to the name of the Lord, we need his grace because nothing comes without his grace.

Jesus said, John 15.5, for apart from me you can do nothing. We cannot walk worthy of his calling. We cannot believe.

We cannot be obedient. We cannot bring honor to God's name unless God's grace is given to us that the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in you. Paul says, according to the grace that is given to you through Christ Jesus.

So what does that mean? You know, there's a commercial on the TV, you know, about American Express, don't leave home without it. And I need to tell you, don't leave home without God's grace. Don't try to do the ministry.

Don't try to do the witnessing. Don't try to do anything without depending on God's grace. And God is giving it to you.

And he's not stinchy, I can tell you that. So how, how do we get God's grace? How do we get it? The Bible says grace is a free gift. God chooses to give to us.

Now you already know I got four grandchildren. I told you now five times, I think. Two of them are four and one is almost three and one is by now five months.

These are the three-year-old, almost three-year-old, and the two four-year-olds. They are actually in India on the way to their preschool. They go to preschool in India when they are there, and they go to preschool here when they are here.

And then I have one more, I think. I really miss her. So I want to look back.

You know, I love these kids. And I love to buy small little gifts for them when I travel. You know, whenever I am in the airport, I automatically go in the little shops and see if I can find a little gift for them or a little card with a bear on it or something.

It's not their birthday. It's not Christmas or Easter when a grandma is supposed to buy something, you know, because it's on the calendar. I would just want to give them something because I love them.

And they don't even have to be extra good. I want to surprise them because if they are at home, they pick me up from the airport. And by now, these older ones, they know grandma has a surprise in her bag.

And they are more than ready to help me unpack my bag and look. Do you know that God is equally eager to give us, his children, his gift of grace? Like I'm so eager for my kids to look in my bag and get the surprise I have for them. I want to read you a couple of verses.

Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise and glory of his grace, which he's freely bestowed on us in the beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, Ephesians 1, 4 through 8. Here it says, God is giving freely his gift of grace. Just like I'm so glad to give these little gifts to my grandkids.

And he lavished upon us his grace. He's not stingy with his grace. Another verse says, we get grace upon grace.

You know, McDonald's has this double, triple burger. That's how God is. He's piling it on top of each other.

But how do I receive? How do I, how do I get this grace to come my way? How can I attract God's grace? You know, we all need it. We, I think we understood that we need it. The first thing is we need to draw near to him, come to him.

My grandkids, they come running to me when they see me. And the little one, the three-year-old one or almost three-year-old one, he knows I got some candy in my purse. I got this little sour things, you know, and little Jonah, when he sees me, he calls from far, I want one, I want one.

He don't even say what he wants. He calls, he sees me, I want one, I want one. He's so confident that he gets one each time.

And the others, they will join in and say, please. And you know, when I run out of these little sour candies, I go to Walmart and buy a new box just because they expect that I have a supply of it. And I don't want to disappoint them.

You know, God longs that we come near to him just like these little kids with confidence that we get his grace. He wants us to come running to him. I want it, I want it.

Hebrews 4.16 says, let us therefore draw near this confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4.16. So the first thing to attract God's grace to come my way is to draw near to him, draw near to the throne of grace to receive grace. And the second thing is, I believe we need a revelation of Jesus.

First Peter 1.13, therefore, Peter writes, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. First Peter 1.13. What is this revelation of Jesus? Peter was writing it in the context when Jesus comes back and be revealed to everybody as the Messiah. Then everything we believed about his grace will be totally fulfilled.

But I think we need a revelation of Jesus right now in our hearts. You know, the more we get to know Jesus, the more we get to know who he is, the more I understand and receive his grace. The more my grandkids know about me, the more they can get out of me, I think.

And so one more. The third thing to attract God's grace to my life, to your life is humility. First Peter 5.5 says, and all of you close yourself with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Proverbs 3.34, yet he gives grace to the afflicted or lowly one. A few years ago, I was sitting one evening in my kitchen on the table, and I was looking up, you know, and all of a sudden I saw a mouse walking through my kitchen into my other room. I couldn't believe it.

Where did that thing come from? And the only conclusion I had, someone left the garage door open, and that mouse is marching through my house. But I don't want to live under the same roof with a mouse. So I got up and I got myself a mousetrap, and I put the favorite bait in it, cheese.

Next morning I got up and it worked. The mouse was gone to mouse heaven. You need to think about this picture when you think, how do we get God's grace? Humility attracts God's grace to my life like cheese attracts a mouse.

Humility attracts God's grace to your life, to my life. Then God is so eager to give it to me. And then God's word says we need to grow in grace and be strong in grace, so the name of the Lord will be glorified through us.

Second Peter 3, 18 says, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In second Timothy 2, verse 1, use therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. So how do we get strong? How do we grow in grace? The three things I told you, draw near often and receive grace.

Second, get to know Jesus deeper, a revelation of his grace. Third, walk in humility. God gives more grace when he sees you humble.

But then there are a few things that can hinder God's grace to come our way. Did you know that? There are some roadblocks that stops God's supply line of grace to reach us. I want to read you what they are.

Hebrews 12, 15 through 16. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that not a root of bitterness bringing up causing trouble in many be defiled, that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. Hebrews 12, 15 and 16.

What does that mean? It means God sends a truckload of grace my way, but then there is a roadblock in my life and the grace can't reach me. And the roadblock is a root of bitterness. I'm bitter against someone who's done something to me.

I'm bitter against someone who took something away from me or someone that made my life miserable. And the second roadblock is taking God's grace lightly. Esau took his birthright so lightly, the blessing he took so lightly.

He gave it away for a single meal. God says, don't take God's grace lightly. Think about it.

Is it the reason why you struggle in some areas so hard? Is the lack of grace for your problem or your trial or your ministry assignment? Could it be that you have one of these roadblocks in your life? Is there a root of bitterness? Are you taking God's grace lightly? And then we can even invalidate or canceling, undo God's grace that he gives us so freely and lavished upon us. The Galatians tried to do that. Paul wrote, I do not nullify the grace of God for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly.

Galatians 2.21. That means I can undo canceling God's grace if I trust in myself, in my own works. If I trust in the law, I say, oh, I can do that myself. I got enough experience.

I'm an expert in teaching. I'm an expert in talking to people and counseling and whatever you need to do in your ministry or in your life. Each time we trust in ourself, in our own strengths, we canceling out God's grace he has for us.

And you remember, we just was looking at all these verses and we came to the conclusion, we need God's grace for everything. And we actually are the ones that sabotage the grace to reach us by doing these things, putting up a roadblock, root of bitterness, taking God's grace lightly and trusting in ourself. Now I have some homework for you.

Take some time and check your life if there are any roadblocks for God's grace. If there is this root of bitterness or taking his grace lightly or trusting in yourself. And then I would advise you remove these roadblocks before you leave this building here.

You want God's grace to be freely available to you so you can live a life worthy of your calling through God's grace and exalt the name of Jesus in your church, in your community and before the world so that the name of Jesus will be exalted even by our enemies, by those that don't love the Lord. Dear sisters, we have come to the end of Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians. And to the end of this lesson, maybe the time you have here before you leave is very short.

I would like to ask you to review some of these things that we talked about and let it sink into your heart so the Lord Jesus can be lifted up through your life and you will walk worthy of his calling and your faith will be answered with power and the name of the Lord will be glorified. Shall we pray together? Lord Jesus, we want to thank you that you have so abundant grace for us, available for everything that we need to do in order to lift up your name. Lord Jesus, I pray for my sisters that you give them this abundant grace that it will go with them wherever you have called them to serve you.

Thank you that you are so loving and so kind and that all your promises you are ready to fulfill in our lives. Thank you, Lord.

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