

(Ephesians) Grace and Glory

by Jeff Noblit

The sermon emphasizes that understanding grace is crucial for glorifying God and recognizing His character and purpose in salvation.

Duration: 1:19:57

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:1-2, Revelation 5:2, Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Ephesians"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the church's role in making and equipping disciples of Christ. He highlights the need for obedience to God's commands and the power of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling this mission. The speaker also emphasizes the glory of God as the ultimate goal of the church's work. He references Revelation chapter 5, verse 9, which states that Jesus has already purchased people from every tribe and nation with his blood, emphasizing that the work of salvation has been accomplished. The speaker encourages perseverance in the face of challenges, reminding the audience that Christians are called to persevere and that God's grace enables them to do so.

Transcript

Ephesians chapter 1, you have doubtlessly heard the expression, He cannot see the forest for the trees. Means you just don't get it. It's right in front of you.

It's right there. You can see, you can smell it, perhaps you can even taste it or touch it, but you just don't get it. You missed the main thing.

As I've studied and prayed and meditated and been edified by some other preachers concerning grace, I really believe that perhaps in the evangelical church and in many of our hearts and minds, that is true of our understanding of grace. We've looked at it, we've studied it, we've analyzed it, we glory in it, but perhaps we've missed the main thing, the primary thing. And I want us to examine that this morning as we come to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 2, as Paul is giving his introductory remarks, writing this letter, probably from a Roman jail cell to the church at Ephesus, a very special church.

Remember, this is the church where Paul spent about three years of ministry. That was excessive for him. And he poured his life into this church.

And John Phillips points out that the interesting thing about Ephesus is that it has a different history than most of the great Greco-Roman cities of antiquity. When you think of Rome, you think of certain things, or when you think of Corinth, you think of certain things like debauchery and sin. But Paul's ministry in Ephesus changed the history forever.

Today, when you think of Ephesus, you think of the great work of Paul. He really changed history there. But as he's beginning this letter, he comes to what we have in verse 2. And he says these words, grace to you and peace from God, our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that was a relatively common way for Paul to introduce a book that he was writing, or rather a letter that he was writing to these churches. Grace to you and peace, always in that order, from God, our father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I've entitled this message today, Grace and Glory.

Grace and Glory. Now, here's my premise. If you've missed the underlying foundation and the overall purpose of God's glory in grace, you've missed grace.

I don't mean you're not saved. I mean, you've missed what it's all about. You've missed the main thing.

If you've missed the glory of God and how God wants to glorify himself through his administration of grace, if you've missed that, you've really missed the essence of why God has grace to start with. Why he has expressed or exhibited or extended grace to us to start with. Now, I want to talk for just a brief moment about our purpose statement.

Our purpose statement as a church, it's written on about everything that we have. And the reason it is, is because it is our marching orders. We are not, and we'll never be here to do what we feel is best, or what we like, or what we enjoy, because this is not our church.

Can I have an amen right there? It's just not ours. It's his church. We get the glorious privilege of being in on his church.

And he has mandated to us through his word what his church is, what his church is to do, and how his church is to do those things. And so from, and I would not be exaggerating at all to say there's 100 to 150 hours in this one purpose statement. The purpose of First Baptist Church is to glorify God.

That has to be first. The glory of God is why everything exists. And in this particular age in which you and I now live, the chief instrument through which God is glorifying himself is his church.

Now there's coming an age when there will not be the church. The kingdom age will come in later. But right now we're in the church age.

God is now saving his elect from the four corners of the earth. And as he saves them, he puts them or constitutes them in a covenant community called a church. And we're to function and fellowship and serve and work together as God's people, giving him glory until he gets through at this age.

But it's all about his glory. So the purpose of our church first to glorify God. Now, how do we do that? By obediently.

In other words, we don't figure out what we think or what we feel. We say, what does God say about his church? By obediently. Now, if we obey him, what will we do? Well, that's the next phrase, making and equipping disciples of Christ.

Well, what is the scope of that activity? In the shoals and throughout the world. Well, how are we going to get that done? The last phrase by the power of the spirit. To glorify God by obediently making and equipping disciples of Christ, both locally and globally are in the shoals and throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But the glory of God is chief. It's primary. The Westminster Catechism, which is a great, great document.

And you may ask, well, what is a catechism? A catechism is just a way to lay out Bible teaching and organize it by topics and in little statement and answer form so that you can remember it. And I'm thrilled that in a lot of places, there's a renewal to go back to some of our Protestant evangelical catechisms. I mean, God forbid, evangelicals know what they believe.

We've lived in an age where there was almost a virtue in being dumb. Biblically. I mean, you are frowned at and disdained if you emphasize doctrine in truth.

And the teaching of scripture is almost esteemed to say, well, we just love Jesus and we have a great time, but we're not real sure what we believe. Well, I'm glad that there's an emphasis on that. Matter of fact, I can get you a very good Baptist catechism that you can use with your children.

I'm challenging my daughters to memorize a Baptist catechism right now. I've offered them \$100 if they can quote it back to me word perfect. So that's a good thing.

But anyway, the Westminster Catechism is sort of the foundation stone that most other evangelical catechisms are taken from. And that catechism begins with this statement. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Is that not a great statement? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So we've talked a little bit about our purpose statement. We have to begin.

Our purpose is to glorify God. Then we talked about the Westminster Catechism, which begins with our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him. You know what? We don't have grace downright.

And since we don't have grace downright in our understanding, we can't enjoy God as we ought to. And that grieves God. God wants us to enjoy Him.

Now, I came to this third thought. It's not completely original with me, but it sure was resonating in my spirit. And that is this question.

Are you listening? What is God's purpose statement? What's God's purpose statement? What's He about? It's simple. It can only be this. The chief end of God is to glorify God and to enjoy Himself forever.

Doesn't that make sense to you? If He enjoyed anything less than Himself, He'd cease being the supreme, exalted, infinitely great being that He is. You see, it would say something about Him being not God if He enjoyed less than Himself. You say, that sounds like an egomaniac.

It would be unless you're God and perfect. The chief end of God is to glorify Himself and enjoy Himself forever. Folks, I don't know if you understand this, but God's into Himself.

He likes Himself. He's thrilled with Himself. He's enamored with Himself.

He's absorbed, if you will, in manifesting the supremacy of Himself. Now, here's where you got to get it. So, He is about the business and His perfect, sovereign plans to redeem a people.

He's elect. And as He redeems those people and extends that grace, He manifests something of Himself, grace that no one else has. And when He manifests that grace and says, all of us wretches and makes us the people of God and glorifies us with Him one day, what has He done? He's glorified Himself.

And that's His chief purpose. That's why you're here, chiefly, to be an instrument that He could extend grace to and in extending that grace, make a statement of how wonderful He is. Oh, church, die to your man-centered theology.

Let's get God in the middle of it all. Where He always was. We sort of left Him.

Well, let's sort of tie this thing together by beginning with a definition of grace. I know you've heard a thousand of them, and I just want to sort of lay it out there again and reaffirm this. Grace.

First of all, we'll begin with two words, unmerited favor. When God extends grace to sinful, wicked man, first of all, He's saying, I'm going to show some favor or good toward you. And I want you to know something fully.

It has absolutely nothing to do with you. And dear badness, brothers and sisters, it's not because you prayed a prayer. It's not because you walked an aisle.

It's not because you did anything. Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is God through the ministry of His Son, Jesus Christ, giving you forgiveness and salvation, which you do not deserve.

And withholding judgment and wrath, which you do deserve. I just think that's a great definition of grace. It's unmerited.

And God has said, I'm going to extend to you forgiveness and salvation. And there's no way you could earn it or deserve it. I'm going to withhold from you the just judgment and wrath you should receive.

But I'm going to withhold that though you do deserve it. Grace. Three verses that affirm this so strongly, we could probably find 300.

But Romans 3, 24 is the first one being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus. Ephesians chapter one, verse seven. In Him, we have redemption through His blood.

The forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. Titus 2, 11, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men. So God's grace is extended chiefly, primarily, foundationally, so that He might be glorified.

Wow. Number one, the purpose of grace, the glory of God. Let's take this further.

Now, grace is an attribute of God. Grace is a characteristic of God. Now, young people, if you're at school and you were talking about a friend and you want to describe them, you talk about their attributes or their characteristic.

An attribute might be that you look a certain way or your hair color is a certain way. So you ought to meet Sally. She's like this and you describe that person.

That's who they are. That's an attribute or characteristic. Well, God has attributes and characteristics.

And you see God having grace and extending grace is a capacity. Now listen, now listen, when God, the fact that He has grace and the fact that He'll extend grace to folks like us. Of course, if we get anything from God, it has to be grace.

That is a capacity that distinguishes God from everyone else. All of the so-called gods and certainly all people. Only God can have or extend grace.

Now, in one sense, God sees and man sees. No, He don't see like we see, but we do have that sense. In one sense, God hears and we hear.

God moves and we move. But only God has grace. That distinguishes Him from all others.

And in extending grace to us, He demonstrates to us chiefly, that is His church, those who are saved by grace. But He also demonstrates to the entire universe something of His supremacy and His glory. Are you grasping that? Because God, listen, is enamored with glorifying Himself.

God is all about showing the excellencies of His person. God is all about showing the supremacy and the wonder and the glory of what He is and who He is. So our redemption is the result of grace.

And the exercise of this grace toward us is to the end of honoring and glorifying His name. Now, we sing often about His name, His name, His name. And it's very, very important that when you sing that, you discipline your mind to say, that doesn't mean the name Jesus.

The name Jesus was just a common name in the Palestinian, if you will, world 2000 years ago. Like John or Jack or Jim or anyone else. Name in the Jewish concept means the attributes or the characteristics of the person.

And God wants His name, that is His characteristics and His attributes, known and esteemed and marveled over and wondered over before His church chiefly, but before the whole world. That's what God's about. And that one attribute, grace.

Now think with me. Are you thinking this morning? That one attribute, grace, could only be seen and understood, therefore wondered and marveled over by saving us unworthy sinners. You see, the goal wasn't to save you.

The goal was to glorify Himself. Are you hearing me? Now that's glorious beyond words that were saved from wrath and judgment and eternal loss. But God, God has a passion to exalt and glorify Himself.

But there was a part of who He is that could only be manifested if He saved unworthy, wicked sinners like us. So He chose to save unworthy, wicked sinners like us to the end that He might show how wonderful He is. Not how worthy you are because you weren't worthy.

That shows how much more wonderful He is. The more unworthy you realize you are, the more wonderful you realize He is because He fully saves you and all that's grace. So God has this passion to glorify Himself in one aspect of who He is.

It's grace and that grace would not be manifest, seen, shown forth unless He saves a bunch of wicked folks like you and I. Well, this comes out so very strongly in the Word of God when we look at the verses

that speak of what God does in saving us for His quote, namesake, end of quote. For His namesake. Now what did we say? Name means His character and His attributes.

To show forth who He is. How unique, wonderful, supreme, glorious His character is. Psalm 25 verse 11.

We begin there. He says, For thy namesake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity. Not, Lord, I've tried hard.

Not, Lord, I meant to do better. Not, Lord, you know, there's some good in me. I just blew it.

No, no, no. That's man-centered. That's unbiblical.

For the glory of your name saves someone like me. I want to tell you, are you listening to me, church? When you go to God with a passion in your prayer life and a dependence that says, Oh, dear God, glorify yourself. That gets the ear of God because that's what He's about.

Because if He glorifies anyone less than Himself, He's sinning and He can't sin because only He is worthy of glory. Psalm 79 verse 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name and deliver us and forgive our sins for thy namesake. Boy, the psalmist understood this.

The psalmist said, there's one hope for God rescuing and saving us even though we're wicked sinners. Put His reputation on the line, then He'll act. Why? Because that's what He's about.

Esteeming, exalting, showing forth the supremacy of His person and His reputation. Jeremiah 14 verse 7. Although our iniquities testify against us. In other words, now listen, iniquities means that bent to rebel, that natural tendency to say, I want my way and do it my way.

And if I have a God and religion, I'll stick God and religion into my way. That's just so prominent in evangelical churches today. Our iniquities are so prominent, there's just no excuse.

Well, what are we going to do? Well, O Lord, act for thy namesake. Act and cleanse and forgive us, God, and give us a new start with you because that will make a statement of who you are and how wonderful you are. Ezekiel 20 verse 44.

Then you will know that I am the Lord when I have dealt with you for my namesake. Notice this, notice this. Not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel.

Now, aren't you thankful for that? Brother Terry, aren't you thankful for that? God reached down and saved and transformed Terry easily because God wanted to show the world, look what I can do with a worthless, wicked sinner. The same with me and the same with... But we can't go plead and say, God, I meant well, I tried hard. No, uh-uh.

For what it does to your reputation, God, to save someone like me, God, do it. I don't know about you, but this kind of gives me security of my salvation. This sort of gives me an assurance that if he saved me, he's going to keep me saved because his name's on the line.

Because if he sent his Holy Spirit to begin a good work in me and he wants to glorify himself by saving someone as wretched as me, if he don't complete it, then he's hurting his reputation. Because he said he was going to do it. Bill Stavron says, I'm so saved it's pitiful.

And we are. Romans 1 15, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles. Hey, we're Gentiles for his name's sake.

So Paul says, God had decided in his sovereign purposes, not just to redeem some Jews and make his church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to take someone like Paul and make him an apostle, a messenger, an ambassador to non-Jews, that's Gentiles, that's our forefathers. So that God would have a people that belong to him from all the tribes, nations, and tongues of the world. Why? Because he wants to be glorified among all the people.

And that's why we do world missions. And that's why we preach the gospel on radio and television. And that's why we pledge churches.

And that's why we go to the Hakaru people in Peru who don't have the gospel. Our Lord wants glory from them. And we want to get in on that process with him.

And he'll get most glory when they're saved through the preaching of his gospel. And all that God would stir us and raise up an army that has a passion for God's glory. Not the good of man.

That's second, but it's a way down second. First, the glory of God. And I want to say it to you for the 1527th time.

When you put the glory of God first, you do more for the good of man than if you put the good of man first. You may not see it that way at first, but it's always true. 1 John 2, 12.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven because you pray to prayer. No, it's good to pray a prayer when you get saved. I'm not talking about that.

But you're forgiven for what? For his namesake. Are you struggling with the security of your salvation? Then remember that if you put your trust in Christ, he keeps you saved for his reputation's sake. That is secure.

Because I want to tell you something. One thing will happen in this universe, and that is our God will be glorified for who he is. And he's not a liar or a traitor or an Indian giver.

He said he saves you, he'll save you. He says he'll keep you, he'll keep you. For his namesake.

Because his reputation's on the line. Revelation 2, 3. And you have persevered and have endured for my namesake and have not grown weary. Here we transfer over from salvation to sanctification.

To the churches in the revelation, he says, it's been tough. You've fallen down. You've blown it at time or two, but you've kept going forward in perseverance because I have supplied the grace to enable you to keep going on.

Why? Because my name's on the line. You guys wear my title. You're Christians.

Christians persevere. And what could be clearer? Look at our chief text again. Look at Ephesians chapter 1. And as Paul summarizes the great truths of grace and how a sovereign God is active in our salvation, then the son, the sovereign son is involved in our salvation.

Then he goes on and says the sovereign Holy Spirit is involved in our salvation. And then he wants to summarize each time. But why? What's the main thing? What's the goal of all of this? Saving these wicked, worthless, hopeless centers through the sovereign work of the father, son, and the spirit.

What's it all about? Let's look at it. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6, to the praise of the glory of his grace. So that those who are saved and in one sense, all the universe eventually will look at how God saved us and people will praise the glory of that kind of grace forever and ever and ever.

And that's why I said earlier, why don't we just get started on that now? Praising the glory of what he is and what he's done. Let's just get in on it now. Let's don't wait till then.

Let's praise him now. Verse 12. Again, he says to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of his glory.

That's what it's all about. His praise and his glory. Verse 14.

The spirit who's given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of his glory. I just want to assert to you and reaffirm to you and hopefully by the enabling work of the Holy Spirit, seal this into our hearts and minds. And that is this.

You and I are saved and we are the recipients of grace. And the end of that is that our Lord might get wonder and awe and esteem and worship and glory by doing that for us. And that's why small groups, you enroll everybody you can in your small group because somehow some way by getting them enrolled, you might get them under the word.

You might get them under the preaching of the word and God may save another one. And by saving another wretched sinner, he gets a little more glory. And that's why we live and breathe and move.

It's not just stuff. And it's not just programs. And it's not just dotting the I's and crossing the T's.

And it's not just going through the motions. And thank God our attendance is increasing. But it's not just growing numbers.

It's the glory of God. And you know what? When a church walks in that, they become an easy church to pastor. Because when the glory of God is what you're about, you know what? Everything else just doesn't matter very much anymore.

You say, God, thank you for these nice clothes. But if you see fit, I don't have to have them because I'm about the glory of God. God, thank you for these nice automobiles I drive.

I enjoy them. But God, if this happens not to be your will down the road, hallelujah, because I'm about the glory of God. God, thank you for this nice home.

God sometimes and truly, truly miraculously enabled us to have that. And if God does that, God, thank you for this nice home. But you know what? If you want to take it away, if there's another plan, it really doesn't matter because I'm about the glory of God.

Isn't that a wonderful way to live? Enjoying it, thankful for it, but not attached to it. And you know what I found out? When you walk that way, you get more stuff than if you tried to get the stuff. I want to close at least this morning's installment on verse 2 with Revelation chapter 5. Would you turn there? Revelation

chapter 5. I just cannot tell you how much this consumes me at times.

And I can't tell you how excited I am about the vision of God letting us be something... Are you hearing what I'm saying? God letting us be something of a catalyst for other Christians and other churches. Not that we're better, not that we've arrived, but folks, this is just missing. It's just missing.

We've got to press forward with our vision statement that we've had for what? 13 years or so now? To be a biblical church God uses as a model for others. Revelation chapter 5 verse 9. And they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals for you were slain. This is Jesus, of course.

And purchased past tense for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Now let's stop right there for just a moment. That's been done.

I'm going to tell you something. Are you listening to me? There's not anything else to do to save the souls of God's people. It's been done.

There is a point in time in history when God the Holy Spirit will do that work of regenerating grace and men and women must come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That has to happen. But the work of conversion, the work of salvation has been done.

He has purchased for Himself people from every people, tongue, tribe, and nation. Why? Why did He do that? Because He's got a passion to see Himself glorified. And He wants to see Himself glorified among every people, tongue, tribe, and nation.

And He gets great glory when He extends grace to unworthy sinners because it says something about Him that nobody else even possesses. That is His grace. Not only does no one else really extend grace, no one else has the capacity to have grace but God.

Well, it goes on, you have made them to be a kingdom and priest to God and they will reign upon the earth. Ultimately, all the redeemed will reign on the earth. Verse 11, Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was myriads and myriads, and thousands and thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.

He was slain, so He's worthy for what? To receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. And every created thing that which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever. And the four living creatures kept saying, Amen.

And the elders found out and worshiped. So what's the repetitive theme? First, Jesus purchased for Himself with His blood people. People, they elect, the Bible calls them, from all the tongues, tribes, and peoples of the world.

And all this is to the end that people will see how wonderful He is to have done such a glorious, gracious thing. And they'll give Him the power, the honor, the glory, and the praise forever and ever. So friend, if you miss grace and God's glory, you've missed the main thing.

You've missed the main thing. You made the cake without the eggs or the sugar. I mean, it's not complete at all.

And I want to tell you something. Grace that is not God-centered in your concept of it, grace that is not the glory of God in the foundation of what it's about, is a cheap grace and not a true grace. And it dignifies man and it denies God His supremacy.

And we can have none of that. Amen? Man must be humbled and God must be exalted. The Moravians were an interesting, unique people during the 18th century.

The Moravians had an incredible passion for God's glory. And perhaps it was one of these very verses that inspired them because they saw that Jesus' reward for His suffering was when people were saved from all the people's tongues, tribes, and nations, and therefore He got honored and glorified for saving such wretches. And that consumed them.

And do you know that during their missions movement, the Moravians had upwards to 40% of their church members who went to foreign mission fields. 40, 40% left. Folks, this is the day when you got on a sailboat and literally they took their caskets with them.

They were not coming back. Because they had a passion that their Lord should be glorified by seeing pagans come to Him through grace all over the world. And the story is told that as those Moravian missionaries would get on those ships in England and start to sail out, they would wave goodbye to their families that they would never see again on this earth.

And they would shout, may the Lamb receive the reward of His suffering. May the Lamb receive the reward of His suffering. In other words, seeing our precious Lord receive the reward of people praising Him for grace, one of His great attributes, was the driving force of their lives.

And may it be ours. Because grace is all about His glory. Now let's go to the second main point here.

And that is the product of grace, which is peace. The product, something is produced in us when God extends His saving grace to us and does indeed save us. And that is peace.

And that's why I think Paul words his introduction to this church at Ephesus with the words in verse two, grace to you, that's always first, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and the subsequent peace, the following peace that comes if you're a recipient of that wonderful grace. Scholars do not know where this Greek word peace came from, but the best surmise is that it comes from the root word.

And I believe this is correct. That means to join or to connect. Isn't that interesting? The word peace for the Christian's peace comes from the root that means to join or connect.

You see, that's man's problem. He's not joined to his creator. That's man's problem.

He's not connected to his Lord, to his God. And that's what the gospel does. The gospel of grace connects man with God.

Ephesians chapter six, verse five says, the gospel of peace. And I think two things are in mind there, peace with God and also peace with my fellow man. A great emphasis in the New Testament writers or by the New Testament writers was to show that Jew and Gentile come together as one in Jesus Christ.

And it would be hard for us to comprehend, I guess, if it wasn't for the Arab-Israeli conflict that we see in the world. And we've seen something of vicious animosity and enmity between those two groups, haven't we? Well, equal to that would probably be the Jew-Gentile animosity of biblical days. They just mutually despised each other.

But the New Testament says, once a Jew is truly saved in Christ, once a Greek or Gentile is truly saved, everything is radically transformed. And what they've received by grace is so infinitely wonderful. And what they were naturally is so deplorable and now it's gone and forgiven.

They come together as one in Jesus Christ, both sinners saved by grace. So it talks about this gospel brings peace and this peace comes from grace. Ephesians 2, verse 14 says, Jesus is our peace.

He brings peace. You see grace produces peace and peace in our hearts is enjoyed when we walk in grace. Now, walking in grace is something I wanna talk about for just a few moments.

Well, how do I? You see, it's one thing to be saved by grace. It's something else to walk in grace. And part of what I mean by that is a lot of us are not enjoying what we have in grace.

You ought to walk in it, exercise it, experience the grace of God that he's bestowed upon us. Let me give you this definition of walking in grace. It's an ever present understanding, an ever present understanding.

I just keep reminding myself. And by the way, have you learned to be a disciplined disciple in your thought life? You are responsible to God to be a disciplined disciple in your thinking. Don't live under the lie and the delusion that I lived under for many years that your thoughts are just your thoughts and you don't have any control.

Hogwash and slop. You are commanded to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. And every time your mind gets on a wavelength that's unbiblical, catch it, kick it out, rebuke it.

Do what David did in the Psalms. David talked to himself, said, soul, why are you downcast within me? Why are you discouraged? Quit being discouraged. There's no reason to be discouraged, hush.

Don't say you're discouraged, just talk to yourself. Now don't do it in front of a lot of folks, but you have to do it. And honestly, about two, two and a half years ago, even though I've memorized scripture all my Christian life, and that certainly was a help, I did not actively think about rebuking, controlling, kicking out and forcing myself to think right.

And I'm telling you when it comes to salvation and what grace is and walking in grace, most of you, if not the vast majority of you have wrong unbiblical thinking. Now, listen, I don't mean evil and rebellious like you get up to do think wrong. I mean, it's wrong.

The world in Satan has programmed it in there. But to you, it's as natural as breathing. But that's why we have the word of God.

You go to the word of God and the sword of the spirit takes the word of God and slashes you and says, cut that out right there. That don't fit God's truth. And you have the joy then of reprogramming your thinking to harmonize in God's word.

So that's what I mean by an ever present understanding. I keep reminding myself of this truth. What truth is that? That is this.

That my salvation and service is all of grace. That my salvation and my subsequent service is all grace. In other words, it's all gifted by God and empowered by God.

I'm not doing anything at all in a very true and real sense. Now, I'm not through with this definition of walking in grace. There's something else here.

An ever present acknowledgement or understanding that my salvation and service is all of grace. Now listen, and that it delights God that I have this attitude. You see, some of you are so programmed by the world and by Satan and probably by some shallow friends and Christian teachers that you're trying to work for God.

You're trying to pay God back. You're trying to pay that debt off and you can do a little bit to kind of please God. And boy, you've got rules and standards and strictness and legalisms and you're trying to do a little bit.

And you know what? That actually displeases God. God wants you to have that ever present understanding that my salvation and my subsequent service for Christ is all of grace. And I just walk every day saying, God, if there's any good in me, it's grace.

If I do any good service for you and your kingdom in this life through my local church, through my small group wherever it is, it's all of grace. And God, I just rejoice in that today. And God says, that's where I want you right there.

Well, brother Jeff, if you teach that, nobody ever served God. The saved people will. The saved people get to thinking on that and they get so grateful and so appreciative.

They want to do more. I'm not a slave driver. I'm not into this thing to whip you into shape.

I'm in this thing to challenge you and show you what God says and give you God's truth. And what you do, and I want you to hear what I'm about to say. What you do, what no other church I know of, your size does.

And that's to have as many people that we have or as many people as we have actively serving God in their local church. And that's just a tremendous blessing to your pastor to see that. And that's a commendation to God in his glory and his grace working in our lives.

So God is thrilled when we have the ever-present attitude that my service, my salvation rather and my service is all of grace. And God delights when I have that attitude. Listen, there is nothing anyone could do in his natural abilities that would in the slightest measure be a worthy service to him.

Nothing, nothing. Now I know we use phrases. Well, he's not saved, but you know, he's a good old boy.

Well, God says he's gonna have eternal punishment. Doesn't sound like very good to me. Now, nothing wrong with using those phrases.

We all know what we mean, but in a biblical spiritual context, we need to be careful that we don't pat people on the back that God says I abhor and I wanna judge unless they get saved. So if there's nothing in my natural abilities, I can do that in the slightest measure would be a worthy service to him. So in a very real sense, now listen to what I'm gonna tell you, you cannot serve God.

In a real sense, you cannot serve God. And here's why, because you do not have a debt to God that in other words, if you have a debt that you try to pay back through service, then you make an assumption that's blasphemy. In other words, if you say, you know, God's up here and I know I'm way down here, but I think I can't be as good as God and I can't serve the father like God, but I can do a little something for God.

If you want with this debtor mentality, this debt service, I'm trying to pay God back a little bit. That in effect is blasphemy. And why would that in effect be blasphemy? Because you're saying God it's not all grace.

I got a little credit down here going. I've got a little payback down here, God. Look what I did, God.

God, I got a little bit of merit down here. Not much God, but just a little bit. Well, whatever you put on it, that's not all God.

That means it's not grace. And God has so ordained that he administers grace so that he can be extolled and exalted. And if you remove that away from him, you've robbed God of the glory he deserves.

So very often a lot of what we think is sincere and service and works, if we've got a debtor mentality going on, I'm gonna pay back God a little bit. Won't God be pleased? It's not pleasing to God. It's blasphemy.

You're stripping God of grace. Now, obviously you're not literally stripping him, but you in effect are saying it's not all grace. I believe this is one of the things Jesus meant when he gave us the truth expressed in Matthew chapter 20, verse 28.

As Jesus says, just as the son of man did not come to be served. Did you see that? Did not come to be served. I just want to pause there.

It's as if Jesus was saying, look, guys, look, guys, look, look, listen to what I'm about to tell you. I didn't come down here because I thought there was some little spark of goodness in some of you and you could actually do some righteous works that would please me and my father. Forget it.

I came down here because you are deplorably wicked. And unless I could change my justice and my holiness, I must condemn all of you to eternal punishment. But in great love, I'm going to come and die on a cross and extend grace to save many of you.

I didn't come for you to do something for me. You can't do anything. Listen to me, friend.

What's a deplorably wicked, vile, corrupt, hell-deserving sinner going to do for a holy God? Nothing that he could receive. So he's saying, I didn't come down here to try to see if I could talk some of you guys into following me. No, I came down here to serve you because you can't save yourself and you can't serve me by yourselves.

You're going to have to have a transformation. You're going to have to be literally born again even to get into my family. You can't even work, strive, pray enough prayers, do enough stuff, baptize enough times to get in my family.

I'm just going to have to born you again. Excuse the grammar there, but you know what I mean. Now, where does peace come in? I'm talking about the product of grace is peace.

Well, peace is this, serving Him in grace. That means that daily walk, understanding that everything I have, my spiritual gifts, the empowerment to use my gifts, to honor my Lord and serve my Lord is all a gift of grace. I have no credit whatsoever.

So I just walk in that, serving Him in grace and resting in His grace and giving Him all the glory. That's a life of peace. You see how that results in peace? I'm fully saved by grace.

I serve knowing it's all grace. I just rest in that. And that's the product of being the grace object of God, peace.

Once again, if in any measure, listen now, if in any measure, my salvation and service can be payback to God, then in a sense, God and I have become partners and that is blasphemy. And you'll notice, do you not notice that every false religious movement, almost without exception teaches, well, God did so much through Jesus Christ, but you got to do so much too. You and God are partners on this thing.

I'm telling you, that is an abhorrent blasphemy of our God of grace. He will not accept the slightest notion that you're going to do something to earn his approval. If so, you said, God, you're great, but I'm pretty good.

Let's meet together and talk about this thing. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. It's grace, grace, grace.

So if I have merited at least a small part of God's favor, then it could be no longer be grace. And once again, God's designed that he would administer grace to his elect. And in doing so, it would show forth an aspect of his attributes that could not be seen in any other way.

Have you ever seen someone do something very gracious, very humble, very self-denying for somebody else, and you use the statement to describe that act this way? Well, that was awful big of him. What are you saying? You're saying they made a big statement about their character by doing that selfless, gracious act. Well, God says, watch me save the vilest and the most corrupt man and even save him in such a way that he can be welcome in the holiness and purest of environments, my presence.

And in God doing that to the death of his son, he shows forth how big he is. And if you do anything to try to assume I'm paying God back, I'm going to work my way back up, God and I are partners in this deal, then you're stripping God of that glory that he wants for his grace. And actually receiving some of it unto yourself.

John Piper calls this the Tonto principle. Now this will date many of you, but how many of you remember the Lone Ranger? Now I remember, but he was before me. I just saw the reruns.

And Piper points out great theological truth here. He points out that Tonto's always there. You remember that? He's just always there doing whatever the Lone Ranger needs.

Tonto's right there. Now for you young guys, this is a guy on a horse, wears a mask. He's got this Indian sidekick and they beat the bad guys up every program.

And Tonto's always there, totally loyal to the Lone Ranger. And John Piper points out there's only one time, one episode that showed why Tonto was there. Because at one point early in life, the Lone Ranger saved Tonto's life.

And in their Indian culture, someone saved your life, you gave them the rest of your life in service. So Tonto was in debtor service. Now that may work for Tonto and the Lone Ranger, but that's blasphemy.

If you think God's the Lone Ranger and you're Tonto, you're not paying back or earning back anything. It's grace. It's grace.

A couple of scriptures that reaffirm this. 1 Corinthians 4, 7, For who regards you as superior? Some of these guys had a problem with their arrogance. So he says to these Corinthians, who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? It's all grace.

You received anything good you got. And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? All grace. Colossians 1, 28 and 29, Paul summarizes his ministry.

Notice the emphasis here on the striving and the labor of his service to Christ. He says, We proclaim him admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also, listen, I labor striving.

Now, these are words that would be used in the delivery room of the hospital. Labor, intense agony is emphasized here. Paul says, I have intense agony and striving in my service to God.

But then he completes the verse. Labor striving according to his power, which mildly works within me. Paul says it's all grace.

Paul said on another occasion, I am what I am by the grace of God. So by grace, we are saved. By grace, we serve.

We cannot bring or add anything to him, to his work or to his kingdom. It's all of grace. And now listen, here's the challenge.

And here's why you preach. Here's why you listen to preaching. So that from this moment onward, every time you get into that debtor service mentality, I'm going to pay God back.

God and I sort of partners in this deal. God's great, but I'm a little bit good. And all that junk that's worldly and unbiblical.

Every time you see that creeping in your mind, you say, God, I repent of that. I will not think on those terms. I want to serve you.

I want to labor for you. But constantly with the acknowledgement that my salvation and all my service is just grace working through me. It's not me.

Just keep catching yourself and keep catching yourself and keep catching yourself until finally one day you become weird. What I mean by that? What I mean by that is finally it is normal for you to think biblically in this area. That's the goal, is it not? So that we can begin to walk in our daily lifestyles as people of truth and not people who say we're saved, but in actuality, we sort of think and function like everybody else.

If you start doing this, don't think you're going to fit in with every Tom, Dick and Harry that claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ. So walking in grace, something I've been trying to emphasize that brings the peace of grace in your heart, really has those two components of resting in grace and serving in grace. I just rest in it.

I just rest in it. I've shared this statement with you many times because it's just sort of what's in my heart and mind. I pray it all the time.

And that's this, God, if you don't save me, I'm sunk. I just rest in you. If it's not all grace, I'm done.

Just throwing the towel today. Now, when you rest in grace and you serve in grace, which is walking in grace, this brings God glory and it brings you peace. So the product of grace is peace.

Paul said grace and peace to you. Well, let's go to the third thing and I'm going to try to hurry here. The person of grace is Jesus Christ.

The person of grace, he doesn't just end with grace to you and peace. In verse two he says, grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a person who administers or brings forth, gives us this grace.

It all comes from and through Jesus Christ. Notice just in the first two verses, how Paul expresses how he is consumed with the centrality of Jesus and everything. First of all, verse one, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Verse one, to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Verse two, grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me just throw some other verses at you kind of rapid fire to show you how grace comes from a person.

2 Corinthians 13, 14, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 1, 6, the grace of Christ. Galatians 1, 15, his grace.

1 Timothy 1, 14, the grace of our Lord. Hebrews 2, 9, the grace of God. Hebrews 4, 16, his throne is called the throne of grace.

Hebrews 10, 27, the spirit is called the spirit of grace. 1 Peter 5, 10 speaks of the God of all grace. And we could go on for a long time.

Verse after verse after verse. Grace originates in him. Grace is unique to him and grace is administered by him.

He is Lord of grace. Now that's a concept of Lordship, isn't it? He's Lord and he's Lord of all, but he's Lord of grace. You know, the British are very, it's a custom of theirs rather to use that title Lord for a lot of different things.

I looked this up and just looked at some of the things. A baron, whatever a baron is, is called a Lord in Great Britain. Some of the younger sons of the Dukes are called Lord so-and-so.

The Bishop of London is called the Lord Bishop of London. In Great Britain, they even have a House of Lords. That's just a figure of speech.

But I got to thinking, our master, our king, our savior is Lord of grace. Wow, what a thought. Now, you know, here's what's difficult to grasp about this.

There's nothing to compare him to. You can't say, this guy has so much grace and this so-called God, but our God's got more grace. No, grace is his alone.

I mean, he's just, grace is him. He's Lord of grace. It's authentic to him.

It originated from him. He's the only one who can bestow it and certainly possess it. Romans 5, 8 says, but God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So here's a God who did something and you and I live in an age that really ought to nauseate us. We live in an age that is consumed with symbolism, but has little substance. Everything is symbolic.

Everything is salesmanship. Everything is marketing. Everything is Madison Avenue.

Everything is external. Everything is surface. Everything is appearance, but not our God.

God demonstrates he did something, his own love toward us in that while we're yet sinners, Christ died, excuse me, for us. Now, I think you know, you've been here long enough that I like for the church to do things in an excellent way. If we're gonna have a brochure all about the church, I want it done in an excellent way.

If we have a program or produce any literature or whatever we do, we purpose to do it in an excellent way, but I wanna tell you something. You know what sells the church? Authentic Christians. And when you go mix it up in the community and Christ is in you and the truth of God is in you, that is what impacts the community.

Not sharp brochures and beautiful auditoriums and thousand one other things. Now, nothing wrong with those. I'm sure not gonna try to do things shabby or shoddy, but the real testament is true disciples.

And he's the God of grace. And he's demonstrated that love and grace through real substance. And that is the death of his son on the cross.

That's the person of grace. Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen, they cannot raise the acts of justice. Grace is a provision for men so corrupt that they cannot change their own natures.

Grace is a provision for men so adverse to God, they cannot turn to him. Grace is a provision for men so blind that they cannot see him. Grace is a provision for men so deaf that they cannot hear him.

And grace is a provision for men so dead that he himself must open the grave and raise them to resurrection. And that's what he does when he saves us. He's the person of grace.

He does that for his children because he's Lord of grace. Now, let's don't forget the context Paul's writing to. Here we have believers in Ephesus.

Ephesus, a commercial center. Ephesus, an exceedingly materialistic city. Ephesus, a city that's enamored with the arts and with entertainment and with amusement.

You know, they had the gladiators and they had their amphitheaters and they had drama and they had all the stuff to thrill them. Ephesus, a city steeped in superstition. By the way, have you noticed when you turn on your television, the old pagan spiritism is back.

People that can help you talk to the dead. Grandma's got something to tell you. I want to say, well, just let grandma tell me then.

Save my money paying you, the medium. This is all new, fanciful, wonderful stuff in America. No, it's old paganism that the Bible condemns.

And here we are in this technological, sophisticated, cultured, educated era. And we're wallowing in simple, base, ignorant, pagan superstition. True of Ephesus also.

Full of superstition. Not to mention the fact that Ephesus was also a sin-crazed city. Worship in Ephesus was committing fornication with temple prostitutes at the temple of Diana or Artemis.

Here's the question. How are these brothers and sisters? By the way, this isn't a fairy tale. These are real Christians getting this letter and they lived in a real city.

How are they going to stay faithful and honor God in that kind of city? Grace. Grace. How are you going to stay faithful and serve God in this kind of a city? And I'm going to tell you, we've got a twist they didn't have.

We're inundated with false Christianity. Let's don't get on a high horse of pride and say, nobody's saved but us. That's not what I mean.

But I'm telling you, if you've got any spiritual discernment at all, it screams at you. There's just a whole lot out there that claims to be Christian that's shallow at the best and just wrong. At the most.

And that's difficult to deal with. How are we going to make it be faithful and honor God and carry on and not compromise and be a faithful witness? Not just for the next six months, but maybe six years or 16 years or 46 years. That's my plan.

My plan is to die faithful to God. Die faithful to God. I suppose you could look at my ministry and say, you had a great beginning.

But you know, that really doesn't matter anymore. I want to end well. I mean, with this, with all my heart, I would beg God to take me to heaven before I would ruin his reputation.

How's Jeff Knobloch going to keep from ruining his? You don't know me like I know me and I don't know me like God knows me. How am I going to stay faithful? I just have to say, God, it's grace. When I'm about to blow it, when I'm about to compromise, when I'm about to give in, when I'm about to stumble and fall, God, if you don't hold me by grace, I'm sunk.

I want to walk in that dependency. Grace. I hope after digging in these truths, and I believe it's true, that you have a new understanding and appreciation for the words that we sing.

Through many dangerous tolls and snares, I have already come. Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. The preceding message comes from the Expository Preaching Ministry of Senior Pastor Teacher, Dr. Jeff Knoblett.

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