

(Ephesians) Grace, Life, and Glory

by Jeff Noblit

The sermon explores the concept of grace, its eternal nature, and its manifestation and application through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 37:37

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of receiving new life from God. He highlights that religious practices and steps are not enough if one does not have spiritual life imparted by God. The preacher explains that grace is the key to receiving forgiveness, justification, righteousness, sanctification, and glorification. He further discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in applying grace, particularly through regeneration, which brings spiritual life to those who were previously dead in their trespasses. The sermon also emphasizes the significance of the church as God's masterpiece work, ordained for His glory in both time and eternity.

Transcript

Ephesians chapter three, we're going to look at verse 21 and we're going to talk about grace, life, and glory this morning. Something of a systematic overview of the church, both what we are as individual Christians, but also what the church is. Some foundational issues, if you will, about what the church is and what she's about.

And these three words prominently come to mind when you think about, biblically speaking, what is the church all about? Grace, life, and glory. Ephesians 3:21 will give us something of a foundation, but it will not be a strict exposition this morning of this text, more of a systematic overview of the totality of biblical teaching. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. The church is so magnanimously important and foundational and primary to God's purposes, but he says the church will be to the end of my glory now in time and forever in eternity. Now there are a lot of things that will just glorify God in time.

Your physical body, for example, creation itself, and many other things. They're limited to time, but the church, the masterpiece work of God, is unto His glory both for time and eternity. The church should have our utmost concentration, devotion, enthusiasm, because God has ordained it is the masterpiece work unto His glory for time and for eternity.

With that in mind, set that aside. Now let's move over and talk about Roman number one, or rather, let me give you an introduction before we get to Roman one. And in Roman, before we get to Roman one, I want to define grace.

Defining grace. Grace comes from a Greek word that simply means favor. Now there's what theologians call common grace.

You need to understand this. That is God's universal, non-saving grace. It consists in all the blessings and goodness given to humanity at large, like physical sustenance.

God sends the rain, the crops grow, and the wicked and the righteous alike are blessed. That's the common grace of God. That's the goodness of God.

God gives men the capacity to have pleasure. The atheist himself can see a sunrise and reap some pleasure out of the beauty of that. That's common grace that God gives to all men.

So God's goodness is shown in common grace. But common grace is not saving grace, and common grace only lasts for time. It doesn't go into eternity.

But then there is what I will call saving grace. Some theologians call it special grace. I'll just call it saving grace.

And that is a grace given to those whom God saves. It's special. It's unique.

It's in addition to common grace. It is saving grace. It is the eternal and absolute free favor of God bestowing spiritual and eternal blessings on the guilty and unworthy.

Let me say that again. Saving grace is the eternal and absolute free favor of God. God freely, in other words, didn't cost you anything, purposes to favor you in wondrous ways and favor you in ways that are both spiritual and eternally lasting.

And he does that to guilty and unworthy ones. Some theologians use the phrase prevenient grace. Prevenient means it comes before.

And their point is that this saving grace comes before any human merit, any human action, any human response to God. Grace is favor toward those who have no merit in them and no compensation is demanded from them. Grace is that divine favor to those who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving.

Grace is that which is completely unsought and it comes as a pure charity. And at the first, it is unasked and undesired. Did you hear that saving grace comes before you ask it for it or desire it? All you have to do is look at the sequence of events in your life before your conversion and ask this question.

How did I happen to read that book? How did I happen to work with that man who witnessed to me? How did I happen to meet this lady who invited me to church? How did I happen to hear that radio broadcast? Jeff Knoblet 30 something years ago in my car. How did that happen? Grace got me there. I didn't do it.

I wasn't desiring it or asking for it. Prevenient grace leads you to that point. Grace is extended to objects who altogether have no attractiveness that caused it to be extended.

Did you hear that? If there is something in you, some inherent virtue or merit whereby God was moved, then you have some boasting as such in the whole relationship and the process of salvation. But there was no attractiveness that caused it to be extended to you. None whatsoever.

Grace cannot be bought, earned, or won by the creature. Otherwise, it would cease to be grace. Romans 11 verse 6 says, but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works.

Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. Now, three quick things about grace. First of all, grace is eternal.

First, our second, Timothy, rather one, nine, who saved us and called us to a home of God. Not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. Did you hear that? Grace was given to you in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

It is tragic to me and sad that you can go to evangelical pulpit and Baptist pulpit and never hear the eternal mind of God on these issues. Never. Everything's pragmatic and in time.

I'm sorry, pulpits of America. You must deal with an eternal God if you're going to preach God at all. He's beyond time and his grace is eternal.

Secondly, his grace is free. Romans 3, 24 says we are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It's eternal.

It's free. And lastly, and I'll elaborate on this one for some season. That is that it is sovereign.

Sovereign. You, my friend, will not dictate to almighty God what his grace is and how he will administer it. Listen to Hebrews 4, 16.

Let us then with confidence draw near. Now, listen to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find help. I find grace to help in time of need.

He calls the throne of God, the throne of grace. That means it's sovereign. You see, if grace reigns on the throne, then grace is sovereign because if this is the sovereign throne of the universe.

Now, when you think of sovereignty, you must think that it is perfect and righteous and proper that he God acts on his own will and outside of any other influence or power period as a sovereign God. He acts on his own will and without any outside influence or power whatsoever coming in to the equation. Grace is on the throne.

Hebrews 4, 16 says it is sovereign grace. Grace is not on the Walmart shopping rack to be examined, handled and chosen by men. If it suits them.

Grace is on the throne of the universe and is bestowed when and on whom the perfect, beautiful, sovereign one chooses and is pleased to do so. I'm very tired of evangelists and preachers laying the glorious grace of God out as if it's some lowly common thing that you can pick up at Walmart whenever you get ready. No, grace comes from the throne of a sovereign God.

Now, think of it this way. All men are born as unrepentant and unbelieving rebels against God. You understand that and believe that Romans chapter three.

No one is good. No one seeks God. All have become useless.

All are corrupt. There's no one good. Romans three says no, not even one.

So all are unrepentant and unbelieving rebels against God. And all of these fully and absolutely deserve eternal condemnation. The sovereign one who sits on the throne in his love and goodness dispenses common grace to all.

He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to bring the rain so that the crops will grow and you will eat. He doesn't have to provide the oxygen so your lungs can function.

That's great. Abolish from your self-serving, arrogant, man-centered, proud minds that somehow you have some rights on this universe. You have no rights before a sovereign God, but to bow down in worship and obey none whatsoever.

But this sovereign one looks down on unrepentant, unbelievable, unbelieving rebels who are against him. And he in common grace, he shows us love and goodness, and he sustains them and supports them and blesses them and helps them. And any of these under common grace who will repent.

And who will embrace by faith, the son of God will be eternally saved. Anyone, anywhere, at any time under the common grace of God will see their rebellion, will see their wicked, unbelieving heart, will see the dastardly vileness of their character and confess it and repent of it and turn to embrace the son. God will save them.

But none will. In the chronicles of the human ages, not one has done that under common grace. All are undeserving.

All are wicked. All are unbelieving. All are showered continually with the goodness of God's common grace.

But none will turn to him. Roman says, no, not one. So God then exercises his divine right as sovereign to extend sovereign saving grace to some of these undeserving, unrepentant, unbelieving rebels.

And when the sovereign one decides in his own will and to his own pleasure to dispense saving grace on some of the undeserving and unrepentant and unbelieving rebels, he does this so that it will be manifested in spiritual and eternal blessings on them. And of course, will be an additional, a whole new layer of revealing God's goodness and God's love to men. It's all his work.

Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10 says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. For we are his workmanship products of the special grace of God. Well, let's go to Roman number one now.

That's the introduction on grace. And let's go to grace eternal in the heart and mind of God. Now, this is what people need to grasp.

Grace was there with God in his heart and mind before anything else was now sub point a grace, a wonderful attribute of God grace, a wonderful attribute of God. You see, friend, God is God. He's not what we think him to be, and he's not what we feel he should be.

He is who he is. That's why when Moses said, who shall I say sent me? He said, just say, I am sent you. I am that I am.

I'm not what you think. I'm not what you feel. I'm not subject to you at all.

I'm God. His attributes cannot be separated from his essential nature, but his attributes, you might say characteristics are flowing out from his very nature. In other words, God does and God is what God in essence is.

He didn't put on something. He's not everything that flows from God in his moral law, his love, his justice, his his wrath, his grace flows out of who he is as a being. He doesn't make something up or put something on because events happen on earth.

And so God changes his mind about stuff. He's immutable, which means he does not change. How could he change what you cannot? Because when you're absolute and perfect, you don't change because you'll be changing to something that's less than absolute and perfect.

If he changes something that's less than absolute and perfect, he'd be imperfect. So he can't change because he's already there. He has arrived, by the way, but he didn't really arrive because he was there already.

He's God. All of these characteristics and attributes flow out of the beautiful perfection of who he is. Do you marvel over him? Are you in awe of him? Do you tremble before him if you don't seek him until you do? Because you're not in a healthy state until you do.

But grace, this grace we're talking about, existed in the heart and mind of God before it was ever displayed in the world through his son. Grace, which is, of course, his unmerited favor to unrepentant and unbelieving rebels, is a wonderful attribute of the very essence or nature of the heart and mind of God. Now, let me give you one, two, three, four, five parts of grace as it occurs in the heart and mind of God.

You will not find this in any systematic theology on earth. I believe God gave this to me. First of all, as I have been saying, it is a part of the essence of the holiness, beauty and glory of the one true God.

Grace is a part of his essential nature or his essence. Now, let's go further. You probably won't have time to write this down.

You may just have to get the CD and give us seven bucks, whatever it is. I don't know. Number two, it includes the desire to reach unworthy sinners in love.

Grace wasn't just there. Grace went forward in a desire in the Godhead. God before the world was desired to reach unbelieving, unworthy rebels in love.

Number three, it includes the wisdom to prepare a plan to reach those centers in love. You say you might have something of a desire to do good to others who are undeserving, but you don't have the wisdom to know how to do it. God does.

God had wisdom beyond man, because when Jesus was going to the cross, even Peter himself said, God forbid it, Lord, you shall not die like this. He didn't have the wisdom to know how to get it done, did he? But God did. My son's going to the cross.

I know how to get it done. So grace includes that it is the very essence of his very being. It is the desire of his heart to reach unworthy centers.

It is the wisdom to know how to prepare a plan to reach those centers. And number four, it includes the will to initiate the plan. And number five, it includes the power to execute the plan.

All of that is wrapped up in what grace is in the heart and mind of God. It's a part of who he is to be gracious. He had the desire to extend special saving grace to his children.

He has the wisdom to propose a plan to accomplish it. He has the will to initiate it, and he has the power to execute that plan perfectly. Aren't you glad you're a child of grace, not a child of wrath? Because he'll execute that plan perfectly.

Also, grace, the wonderful attribute of God. Now, being in our outline, grace in the counsel of the Godhead, grace in the counsel of the Godhead. So what about what I'm saying here is there are things happening in the heart and mind of God that are a part of his grace toward unworthy, unbelieving rebels that he would say.

I'll just not much more than mention these. In grace, he chose us, the Bible says, before the world began. I think I've got about 25 verses on that.

Chose, our chosen is a biblical word, and I'm just using biblical words here. In grace, he foreknew us. This is all in the eternal heart and mind of God now.

We're not to time yet. But in the eternal mind of God, as a part of God's attribute, there was the choosing. There was the foreknowing in grace.

He also elected us another Bible word, and I know chosen and election are used interchangeably, but they're also used separately. He elected us in grace. The Bible says he predestined us marked out beforehand.

In grace, the Bible says he called us. In Romans chapter eight, he uses the word called in the past tense, which means it was settled in the eternal mind of God. In grace, he justified us, Romans 8:30, which means we have a new relation to the law.

Now long, no longer are we guilty and condemned into the law. Now we stand justified and righteous before his holy law through Christ. In grace, he sanctified us, set us apart for his own special pleasure and purposes.

And in grace, he glorified us. So he chose us for new us, elected us, predestined us, called us, justified us, sanctified us and glorified us all in his eternal mind before the world began. That's all a part of grace that existed in the heart of God.

A summarizing verse is Ephesians one, three and four. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love. Before the foundation of the world, all of these components of grace were there just waiting to be manifested and played out in time whenever he invented.

Check that whenever he created time, you understand time was created. Time that we live in time in space history was a creation of God and he's above and beyond it. Well, that's grace in the eternal heart and mind of God.

Now let's go to Roman number two. This is a grace manifested and applied. Let's go further.

All right. Is it going to stay just in the mind of God? No, God's going to manifest it and apply it. So we're going now from eternity into time.

Making that step sub point a grace in the work of the son. Grace in the work of the son. All right.

First of all, we know the son came in perfection. That was a part of his grace work was being perfect and remaining perfect. There's no sin found in him.

He kept all points of the law. Therefore, he fully qualified as the guilt offering for our sins. Had he sinned, he would not be qualified.

He could not accomplish the task of grace that grace for ordained before the foundation of the world, but he came and he did that work in perfection. The virgin birth, the sinless life, the perfect obedience, his perfection, also his crucifixion. We're having to run through things that we could preach weeks on, obviously.

But in his death on the cross, his crucifixion, he became the substitution for us in our place before the holy bar of justice and in taking the wrath of God for us in our place. He satisfied all the demands, holy wrath and justice had against us. So in his crucifixion, he perfectly won and saved his sheep, substituting for us and satisfying the wrath of God, his resurrection.

If he were not raised from the dead, he was raised for our justification. The Bible says we would still be in our sins if he were not raised. And then lastly, his intercession before God in heaven.

There he sits at the right hand of the majesty on high and his wounds doth yet plead for us. All the grace in the work of the son, his perfection, his crucifixion, his resurrection and his intercession. John chapter one, verse 17, is something of a summary for the law was given through Moses.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. One of that that right there is a magnanimous statement. God gave Moses his law.

And by the way, God's law he gave to Moses emanates from his very essence. The law is holy and perfect and right. But God did not only have the moral perfections of his person extended through most of the law.

He also had something called grace in his heart and mind that he extends through his son, Jesus Christ. You better get out of Moses and you better get in Jesus. If you have any hope, if you're trusting some law system, some religious system, some ritual, some ceremony, some ethic, some moral code to somehow make you pleasing to God, you're in Moses.

You better get out of Moses and you better get in Christ. The law came through Moses, but grace comes through Jesus Christ. Well, grace in the work of the son, that's the manifestation of grace.

Now be in our outline grace in the work of the spirit. That's the application of grace or the connection of grace to man. You see, get grace comes from the person of God.

Grace is manifested in the person and the work of the son of God. And grace is applied to us by the spirit of God. You could word it this way.

The father is the fountain of grace. He's the fountainhead. You know, the fountainhead is where the water just gushes out.

And for all eternity past, all through time and all eternity future, the grace of the fountain that flows from the heart of God never dries up. The father is the fountain of grace. The son is the channel of grace.

The spirit is the bestower of grace. Now let's talk about the spirit for just a moment. That's what we're talking about.

Grace in the work of the spirit. He bestows, he applies grace. One of the ways he applies it is regeneration.

Ephesians 2, 5, Even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. Dead spiritually to God, having only a physical, biological existence.

But the life of God was absent. And God comes through the ministry of the spirit and regenerates and brings life. That's grace coming in contact with you, bringing that life.

We'll talk about that more in a moment. Then there's the sealing of the spirit. Ephesians 1, 13, Sealing, regenerating, but also he seals.

Being perhaps a little trite in my expression, he seals the deal. He doesn't just start it, he finishes it. He seals the deal.

There's no way you can believe in the eternal security of the believer if you do not hold to the fact that the spirit of God initiates it and completes it. Don't put yourself somewhere. Yeah, but then I have to come along and keep.

No, he initiates it and he completes it or you're going to hell. He seals it. Ephesians 1, 13, In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

There's the sealing work that we're not aware of, but there's also a sealing process. And I call that an assurance or a confirming process whereby the spirit of God speaks to you. You sit under true Bible speaking and the spirit of God says, Amen to you and amen to you and amen to you.

Your flesh may rise up and say, I don't like that. But the spirit in you says, amen. Am I the only one that has that experience? Am I alone in this? No, you do it too, don't you? Yes, I get in my mind and think things through.

I get in my human emotions and I feel so deeply about things. Some of you are so enslaved to the idolatry of your emotions. You're not to make an idol of your emotions.

You're to make a God of the God of scripture. Tell your intellect and tell your emotions to bow at the throne of God. And when you read the word of God, you memorize the word of God.

You go to small group Bible study. You sit in the preaching of the word of God and the spirit of God. If he's in you says a resounding amen and takes you to the core of your being.

It brings you once again this Sunday to repentance of where you've let data and information and conclusions come into you out of a Satan controlled world that are not true and not pleasing to God. And you cast those back out and stand again on the rock of the immutable, infallible word of God and his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me say something to you, church member.

If that is not your Sunday pattern, you're backslidden on a holy God. You come in here every week humbled before a holy God and say, God, speak to me and I will yield. And only listen to me, only the spirit of God can bring proud men and proud women to bow before the word of God and say, God, you're right.

And I'm wrong. Thank you for helping me this Sunday at church. Amen.

Amen. I didn't mean to spend so much time on that. The regenerating work, the sealing work, and then the sanctifying work that that ties right in with the sealing work whereby he is increasingly sanctifying us and setting us apart.

But there is a sense in which positionally you are already sanctified. You're already set apart as he is. You're already in Christ seated in the heavenly places in the eternal mind of God.

But in time and in space history, you are being sanctified. Both are true. Second Thessalonians 2 13.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you. There he goes again. God chose you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth.

Now, notice where belief comes. Belief comes after God chose you and after the spirit's work of sanctification. By the way, that's a good biblical order to things, sir.

I'm sorry. You're not in charge, ma'am. You're not running this thing.

Grace, which is the only way you'll ever be saved, is on the throne. It's a throne of grace. It is sovereign grace.

It acts according to the pleasure and the will of the almighty sovereign one without any influence whatsoever from any outside source whatsoever. Do you get humbled when you look at the truth of God's word? It's a very healthy and good thing to be humbled before him. You see, in grace, when the gospel is preached, the spirit applies the gospel in saving power to the soul.

He brings life to the spiritually dead, conquers their rebellious wills, melts their hard hearts, opens their blind eyes and cleanses them from sin. That's the spirit applying the grace that came from the eternal heart and mind of God before the ages began. A.W. Pink, who I drew from significantly for this outline, quotes G.S. Bishop in his book, *The Attributes of God*.

Here's what G.S. Bishop said about it. Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen they cannot reach the bar of justice, so corrupt they cannot change their own natures, so averse to God they cannot turn to him, so blind that they cannot see him, so deaf that they cannot hear him, and so dead that he himself must open their graves and lift them to resurrection. Roman three, Roman three.

Grace produces spiritual life. Now we've already seen grace was eternal back there in eternity past in the heart and mind of God. We looked at all the aspects of that that we have time to look at.

Then we came to time and saw that grace is manifested through the son's work. It is applied through the spirit's work. Now we come to grace produces spiritual life.

This is another component of the activity of the spirit's work, but I wanted to set it apart separately. All right. So this is a further and essential product or work that grace produces in the life, and that is he imparts spiritual life.

Now this is radically missing in most churches and in most pulpits. We've worked out a system of religion. We've worked out a four or five steps.

We worked out four spiritual laws. We've worked out this track and that track, and there's good in all of those things, by the way, but the most important thing is, has God given you new life? That's a key question, because if he hadn't imparted spiritual life, pardon isn't there either. Forgiveness is not there either.

Justification is not there either. Imputed righteousness is not there either. Sanctification is not there either.

And glorification will not be there either. All of those whom he justifies and he sanctifies and he'll glorify are those he imparts spiritual life to. Dads, as you shepherd your family and as you pastor your home, don't just lead your children through a simple hoop jump.

Children won't obey and children want to please and they'll go through the motions, pray with them and labor with them and study the word with them and pray some more until they can say, yes, my heart has been changed. Something that has happened that I could not do. Only God could do this to me.

Ephesians 2, 1 says you were dead in your trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2, 5 says, even when you were dead, you made us alive together with Christ. By grace, you have been saved.

Listen to Romans 8, 11. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the spirit who dwells in you.

The spirit must dwell in you spiritual life to a mortal body. That's what he's speaking of. Now, while we are declared just in our relation to the law.

The work of grace does far more than just get that accomplished. It also radically transforms a person by imparting spiritual life. Second Corinthians 5, 17 says, therefore, if any man is in Christ, he's a new creation.

Behold, all things have become new. The old things have passed away and everything's new. What's new? Brand new life has come in.

New life. I remember as a young Christian, I have to fuss on you old, old, old Baptist because I went to your churches. I was a new believer and I didn't hear these truths.

And by the way, you ought to be ashamed. I don't mean groveling around guilty, but I mean, we ought to be ashamed that a 19 year old boy with no spiritual background can be converted and come in our churches and learn more error. They can learn truth.

Nobody told me to look for spiritual life. They always ask me, did you go through the motions? Now, maybe someone did, and I missed it. So because there were some good, sweet Christians who helped

me, and I thank God for them.

But far too much of the teaching and the preaching and the emphasis was get them down the aisle, go through the motions.

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