

# Ephesians Chapter 2 - Part 2

by William MacDonald

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*God's plan of salvation is available to all and sufficient for all, and it is based on the substitution of Jesus Christ, who meets all the qualifications for the substitute.*

**Duration:** 43:17

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:1, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 2:10

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a parable told by Jesus to illustrate the difference between justice and grace. The parable involves a farmer who hires workers to pick grapes. Some workers make an agreement with the farmer to work all day for a denarius, while others are hired later in the day without any agreement. At the end of the day, the farmer gives all the workers a denarius, regardless of the hours they worked. The preacher then goes on to explain that God's plan of salvation must be offered to all and be sufficient for everyone. He emphasizes the difference between the burdensome nature of the law and the liberating nature of grace. The preacher also highlights the importance of recognizing that the substitute for our sins must be human, sinless, and divine.

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## Transcript

I'm a little bit worried these days. I'm wondering what the folks at McDonald's hamburgers are thinking, because there aren't many boys and girls from Calvary Bible Chapel coming there anymore. For a while there were, when they memorized the books of the Bible, I tell you, they were really giving out a lot of hamburgers and french fries, but lately, I don't know.

I think Baskin and Robbins might be looking for some, because they have certificates, too. So, you boys and girls, you'd better get going, you know, memorizing some of these scriptures. Ten Commandments, 1 Corinthians 13, the Beatitudes, not hard, just have to have the will to do it.

Okay, let's just read Ephesians 2 once again, and we're going to review, first of all, what we went over last week. Just going to read a few verses here, so well-known to us. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8 through 10.

Now, last week we were talking about the grandeur of God's grace. And we mentioned that in devising a plan of salvation, there seems to be a conflict between two of God's attributes, God's love and God's righteousness, because God's love wants to see everybody in heaven, but God's righteousness demands

that sin must be punished. And how can God reconcile these two things? How can God think up a plan of salvation where his love is shown, and yet his righteousness is shown at the same time? Where he doesn't wink at sin, he doesn't condone sin, he doesn't pass over sin, but all the righteous demands of his righteousness are met.

And we mentioned that the solution lies in the word substitution. Substitution. If God could somehow find a substitute.

We're all familiar with that idea of substitution. If you watch football games or any other sport, send in substitutes. So, we mentioned last week that in devising a plan of salvation, there were seven requirements that God had to think of.

Since he loves everyone, his salvation, first of all, must be offered to all. In other words, any plan of salvation must have a worldwide proclamation so that anyone and everyone can enter in. Paul argues that fact in Romans chapter 10.

How can they call on someone if they've never heard him? It presupposes a worldwide proclamation of the gospel. Then not only that, but God's salvation must be sufficient for all. It must meet the needs of every person in the world without exception.

Getting harder all the time, isn't it? And then I like this one, too. It must be something for which everyone is eligible. There's no use making an offer if there are some people that can't get in.

No amount of evil should be able to bar anybody from participation. And then it must be simple enough for anyone to understand. I'm glad that any plan of salvation must be understandable, must be comprehensible.

Very, very important that it should be so. But that isn't all. There's more.

It must be something which anyone can receive. And I mention here that any religion that offers spiritual blessing for money can't be the true religion, because there are some people that don't have any money. And so it can't have any conditions that some people can't meet.

And we mentioned last week, too, that there must be no possibility for human boasting. Whatever plan of salvation God works out, it must be such that nobody can boast about his own attainment, because then heaven wouldn't be heaven. That's pride boasting, and pride is a sin, and you can't have any sin in heaven.

And so in order to exclude boasting, this plan of salvation must have, everybody must have the same sickness for heaven. Nobody can be more fit for heaven than anybody else. And then finally, the plan must be one which God doesn't force on people against their will.

Very, very important. Must be something that God doesn't force on people against their will. Okay.

Then there are certain qualifications that any... Remember we said that it has to be by substitution. Well, there must be certain qualifications that a substitute has to meet. He has to pass five tests.

First of all, the substitute must be human. Otherwise, the exchange would not be a fair one. It wouldn't do for an angel to be a substitute for a person, for a man, or a woman, a boy, or a girl.

Has to be a human substitute. And that isn't all. He must be a sinless person, because otherwise he would have to die for his own sins.

Remember, the wages of sin is death. So whoever the substitute is going to be, he has to die for his own sins. But not alone that, not alone must he be human and sinless, he must be God.

Oh, that's very, very important. Why? Well, because his death, his person and his death has to be of such value to cover all the sins of all the world. Any number of people, the value of the substitution must be great enough to cover all the sins of humanity, past, present, and future.

And then we mentioned last week that the substitute must shed his blood because the divine law has decreed that without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sins. Very, very. And there's another one here too, and that is the substitute must be willing.

He must be willing. Wouldn't it be terrible to have an unwilling sacrifice being dragged to die for the sins of others? Satan would say, look, that's not fair. It's not right for God to do that.

He would be right too. So the substitute must be willing. But you know, it's a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus Christ qualifies on all of these matters.

He qualifies perfectly on all of these matters. I got so many papers here that I'll give you a chance to write down some of those. Does the Lord Jesus meet those qualifications? Well, in marvel of marvels, he's the only person in the universe who does meet them all.

First of all, he became man at Bethlehem. He was born of the Virgin Mary, and I think that's really wonderful. He became perfect man.

Not only that, he's God. He has the attributes of God. He has the titles of God.

He's equal with God in every respect. And he is without sin. The record cannot be denied.

He knew no sin. He did no sin. And there is no sin in him.

Did he shed his blood? Yes, he shed his blood as a substitute for sinners on the cross of Calvary. But was he willing? Did he do it reluctantly? No. He did it willingly so that sinners might be saved.

He said, lo, I come in the volume of the book that is written of me. I delight to do thy will. Oh, my God.

So, you had certain qualifications for any plan of salvation and certain qualifications for the substitute. And the Lord Jesus met all of those qualifications for the substitute. And now, what about God's plan of salvation? Does that qualify? Yes.

Notice that God's salvation is available to all. That's wonderful, isn't it? No one to whom it's not available. No matter how primitive a man is or how illiterate a person is, might not even be able to read.

Doesn't make any difference. You'll still be saved. And it's sufficient for all the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John says that. Not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. That's what my Bible says.

And this is wonderful. Everyone is eligible because everyone is a sinner. It's our sins that make us eligible for the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

I really think that's thrilling, don't you? It's simple enough for anyone to understand. The Lord Jesus uses words like, Come, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Nothing difficult about that, is there? And anyone can receive it. Anybody can believe. Not anybody can walk.

Not anybody can see. Not anybody can hear. But anybody can believe.

Anybody can repent. You might not be able to do a lot of other things, but you can repent. That's what it takes.

Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ excludes boasting. Grace excludes boasting. Are you saved? Well, yes, but not through anything in me.

I'm saved through the work of Christ. No boasting there, is there? You see, the opposite of that is, are you saved? Well, yes, I've always lived a good life. Boasting.

That's not God's way of salvation. God's way of salvation excludes boasting because Christ did the work of salvation and we just reach out our empty hand and receive it as a free gift. And man is not coerced into accepting God's salvation.

It's marvelous that God has made us free moral agents and the choice is up to us. God doesn't force anybody into the kingdom of God. Okay, all of that by way of review of what we went over last week.

Grace is really wonderful. What is grace, anyway? Well, we can begin by saying grace is favor, but that's not enough. Grace is more than that.

Grace is undeserved favor, but even that is not enough. It's more than that. Grace is undeserved favor to those who deserve the very opposite.

In other words, we deserved hell, but grace offers us heaven instead of hell. The words grace and gift are close relatives. I don't know whether I'd call them brothers or sisters or cousins, but they're close relatives.

Grace and gift. Grace is a gift and for that reason it can neither be earned or deserved. The minute you add any thought of earning or deserving grace, it's no longer grace.

You put it out the window. The gift of God's grace is of such enormous proportions that no thought of ever doing anything for it, of ever repaying it, is permissible at all. And as we said last week, the true gospel is salvation by grace.

Alone. Boy, how important it is to drill this into the minds of people. Grace means you don't deserve it.

Faith means you must receive it by an act of your will. And nobody ever really understands the gospel until he understands grace. There's an awful lot of confusion in the church world about today, but nobody ever really understands the gospel unless he understands grace.

The grace of God is really wonderful. It can take a repentant prostitute and forgive her and make her a companion of Jesus Christ in eternal glory. That's wonderful, isn't it? It can take the most repulsive, dirty man that you can possibly think of, the very scum of the earth.

It can convert him, make him a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, destined him for eternal glory. It can take a thief in the dying moments of his life. I mean, his whole life has been a life of shame.

And wickedness and evil. And it can take him and save him in the very closing moment of his life and take him to paradise that very day. Can't beat that, can you? I think it's wonderful.

Grace populates heaven with converted murderers, sex fiends, alcoholics, drug addicts, liars. No one is beyond the saving power of grace. I want to tell you, grace has lifted millions of people out of a horrible pit, set their feet upon a rock, established their going, put a new song in their mouths, even praise to the Lord.

And then just taking them home to the Father's house in heaven. I always like that statement that Oxford professor C.S. Lewis made. He told how the Lord converted him when he was kicking and screaming, the most reluctant convert in all of England.

And he said, who can duly adore that grace, which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape. I tell you, grace is wonderful, isn't it? I love it. I really love it.

There was a hymn writer named Haldor Lewinus, and I think he said it very well. He was right on key, not only musically, but in every other way, doctrinally, when he wrote that the wonderful grace of Jesus is broader than the scope of our transgressions, greater far than all our sin and shame. We sing that, don't we? Broader than the scope of our transgressions, greater far than all our sin and shame.

My, that's wonderful. And I think every true believer sooner or later is going to have to say, I don't know why the Lord ever saved me. It just passes my imagination why he'd ever saved me.

I often think of that. People in San Leandro have better personalities than mine, and yet he saved me. The price he paid for me was definitely too high.

I think we want to mention that grace transcends human reason, but it doesn't violate it. When I say that, I mean, grace is greater than human reason. If we got a group of people in a think tank and got them thinking about this whole subject on a reasonable basis, you never would have come to Calvary, would you? Reason would never have had the Son of God come down from the palace of glory and die on a criminal's cross.

It's not reasonable. It transcends reason. That doesn't violate it.

The grace of God transcends logic, but it doesn't violate it. You know, as you trace through all the steps of logic, you never would have come to the cross. You never would have God dying for his creatures.

Dying a terrible death for his creatures 1900 years ago. Just isn't logical. It's greater than logic.

It surpasses reason. It surpasses logic. It surpasses knowledge.

Someone has described grace in this way, and I really like it. I think it's one of the best things I've read. Grace is not looking for good people whom it may approve.

It's not grace to approve good people. That's justice. But it's looking for condemned, guilty, speechless, and helpless people whom it may save, sanctify, and glorify.

That's marvelous. Grace is not looking for good people whom it may approve. For it's not grace, but justice to approve goodness.

It's looking for guilty, condemned, speechless, and helpless people whom it may save, sanctify, and glorify. Grace is greater than mercy. I mean, they're close, but they're not the same.

Mercy withholds the judgment that a person should receive. For instance, here's a man, and he's condemned to die in the gas chamber. And in an act of mercy, the governor commutes his sentence to life in prison.

It's mercy. He should have died, but he gets a lighter sentence than that. He gets a sentence of life imprisonment.

It's an act of mercy. He doesn't get the retribution that he deserves. But grace is better than that.

It takes that guilty sinner and acquits him, so there's no charge in the books against him. That's better, isn't it? That's better than mercy. In other words, positive righteousness is imputed to that man when he believes in Jesus.

Here's a guilty sinner before God. He repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. And God imputes to him all his own righteousness.

God has made Christ to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, so that we stand before God now in all the righteousness of God himself. That's better than mercy. Mercy would never do that for you.

Mercy would give you a lighter sentence, maybe, but it wouldn't acquit you, not for a moment. Grace says I'm guilty, but I believe Jesus died to pay the penalty of my sins, and I receive him as my Lord and Savior. I don't deserve eternal life, but I receive it as a free gift from God.

You know, the Lord Jesus gave a good parable that illustrates the difference between justice and grace. There was a farmer, and he owned a lot of grape vines, and the time came to pick the grapes. And he went out in the morning, and at the front gate, there were a group of men looking for work.

And they made a bargain with him. They said, we will work all day for you for a denarius, which was a day's work, a day's wage. That's what they said.

They made an agreement with him. They would work all day for a denarius. And so he said, okay, I'll give you a denarius, work all day.

So they started early in the morning, and they worked till five o'clock at night. He went out during the day, and he saw other men looking for work. And he said, you want work? And they said, yes.

He said, go into the vineyard, and I'll pay you whatever I should. No word about the denarius. Just said.

And they went, no agreement at all, no labor contract. They just went and worked. And at the end of the day, he gave them all a denarius.

Now, the first people got justice. Those who agreed to work for a denarius, they got justice. The rest of the people got grace.

See, they got more per hour when they left it to the farmer to decide what they should get. They all got a denarius, but they worked less hours. And so they got more per hour.

That was pure grace. And I want to tell you, grace is better than justice. And grace is a better principle than law, too.

And these two are contrasted all the time in the Bible. Grace is a better principle than law. The law tells a person what he must do to obtain a righteous standard.

Grace puts him in that righteous standard and then tells him to live in harmony with it. That's tremendous. Let me say that again.

The law tells a person what he must do, like the Ten Commandments, to obtain a righteous position. Grace says, I'm going to put you in that righteous position. Now, you go and walk worthy of it.

That's wonderful, isn't it? The law says, do, and you will live. Grace says, live, and you will do. The law says, try and obey.

Grace says, trust and obey. Quite a difference. The law tells you what to do, doesn't give you the power to do it, and it curses you if you don't do it.

Just think of that. The law tells you what to do, doesn't give you the power to do it, and curses you if you don't do it. Grace teaches you what to do, gives you the power to do it.

What power? Power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. Grace teaches you what to do, gives you the power to do it, and rewards you when you do it. Rewards you when you do it.

So, law carries the threat of punishment, and grace carries the promise of reward. I think that's beautiful. Law condemns the very best, because nobody's ever kept the law.

Law condemns the very best, grace justifies the very worst. You know, even if Hitler had trusted the Lord Jesus in the closing minute of his life, God would have saved him and taken him home to heaven. That's how wonderful the grace of God is.

Or Stalin, or Mao Zedong. The law reveals sin. Grace takes away sin.

I'd rather have my sin taken away than have it revealed, wouldn't you? Any day of the week, and twice on Sundays. The law encourages boasting. When you find people on the law platform, you say, well, how are you doing? Well, I'm doing better than a lot of people I know, you know.

The law encourages boasting. Grace excludes boasting. The law says you must, you shall, you shall not.

Grace says you should, you ought. One tells what I have to do, the other tells what my new nature really wants to do. I've used that illustration here before, I know.

It's like, grace is like telling a mother, now you take good care of that baby, because that's what she loves to do. And that's why the Lord's teaching to those who are truly safe is really very welcome, because he's telling me to do what my new nature just loves to do. Under law, the work is never finished, never finished.

But grace tells of one who finished the work for us, on the cross of Calvary. The law says, thou shalt love. Grace says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

The law lays heavy burdens on people to bear. And you know, the burdens of grace are light. Jesus says, my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Law is a system of bondage. Grace is a system of liberty. It's the difference between pressure and privilege.

Law and grace is the difference between pressure and privilege. And incidentally, there's no mercy in the law. The law doesn't say, well that's okay, you were a nice boy, and you did your best.

No, the law never does that. It's cold, hard, and inflexible. But you know, grace tells us of a God who's rich in mercy.

These in chapter two. God who is rich in mercy for his great love, for which he loves us. How to appreciate grace.

You'll never appreciate grace until you recognize four things. I think these things are basic. You'll never appreciate grace until you recognize four things.

First of all, who the substitute is. Second, what he did. Third, the kind of people for whom he did it.

And fourth, the things that come to those who receive him. Never appreciate grace until you think of those things in recognition, and you'll never plumb the depths of them, but get down there anyway. Who Jesus is.

First of all, he's not just a mere human like ourselves. He's human, but he's not a mere human like ourselves. He's the God who filled, J. Oswald Sanders wrote, the most astute intellects of all time have delved into the inner meaning of Christ, death, and the cross, but all have failed to plumb his infinite depth.

Like Paul, they have withdrawn with the cry of bafflement, oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways pass by me. I know I've quoted Harold Stinson before.

He said, the grace of God as seen in the cross of Christ will mean nothing to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life. Spurgeon calls on us to behold the wonder of it. He says, Jesus has borne the death penalty on our behalf.

There he hangs upon the cross. This is the greatest sight you will ever see. Son of God and son of man, there he hangs, bearing pains unutterable, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

Oh, the glory of that sight, says Spurgeon. The innocent suffering, the holy one condemned, the ever-blessed made a curse, the infinite glorious put to a shameful death. You'll never understand the grace of God until you understand in some measure what he did for us.

I want to tell you, the Savior didn't deserve such vile treatment, and we're not worth the stupendous price he paid. It was too much. If we could take it in, our eyes would melt in thankfulness, and our hearts would dissolve in tears.

As the hymn writer says, dissolve my eyes in thankfulness, or dissolve my heart in thankfulness and melt my eyes and ears. For whom did he do it? Who Jesus is, what he did for us, for whom did he do it? We were ungodly sinners, ungrateful wretches, undeserving worms. This is not popular nowadays, but this is the truth.

We were lost, helpless, and hopeless. We richly deserve hell. I think any well-saved soul will say that I deserve to go to hell.

Not the language of the ordinary person today, it's true. There was absolutely nothing lovable about us. There was plenty lovable about the Lord Jesus, nothing lovable about us.

We didn't want to have anything to do with the Lord. It says in the scripture, we desired not a knowledge of the Lord, and we didn't want any cosmic big brother interfering with our lives, just like that. At our best, our righteousness, Bible says they were as filthy rags, not a pretty picture.

In the original language of the Old Testament, not a pretty picture. All the best we had to offer to God was just like filthy, filthy rags. Prophet Jeremiah was right when he said, the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things.

Who can know it? No one, I don't think no one can ever know the depth of depravity of the human heart. If you're anything like me, sometimes you're just amazed when you look within yourself and see what's there. See what you're capable of.

That's our best. At our worst, we were capable of murdering our God. At our worst, we were capable of murdering our God.

Of course, here we have to stop and we have to distinguish between the way we see ourselves and the way God sees us. When you talk to people in the world, they see themselves as very good, you know. They say, well, there are a lot of people worse than I am.

I do my best. I try to be a good neighbor. I pay a hundred cents on the dollar.

I do this and I do that. And it's true. There are people, and you have some neighbors too, who are kind, amiable dispositions.

Isn't it right? Kind. Give you things. And they're amiable.

And they're good neighbors. And some of them attend church regularly. They reach out to the poor and to the sick and to the disabled.

You know people like that, and I do too. Decent, law-abiding citizens who are friendly and outwardly respectable. But we have to distinguish between that and the way God sees them.

God says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There's not one of us who doesn't sin. And none of us would want our thought life to be made public.

I think that was one of the beautiful things about the Lord Jesus when he was here on earth and accompanying with people. He could have exposed them. He could have just exposed what they were thinking and they would have shriveled up and died.

He didn't do it. He never did it. He never needlessly exposed anybody.

I'm so glad that you are not omniscient today. And that I have to live with you. Jesus is wonderful.

What we are, and this is the way God sees us. What we are is a lot worse than anything we've ever done. And some may be better than others.

But God sees us all as desperate sinners in perilous and urgent need of salvation. Ephesians 2 says, We were dead in trespasses and in sins. We walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience, like with a ring in our nose and led about by the devil, unsaved as we were.

Dear friends, we're the kind of people for whom Jesus died. You wouldn't have done it and neither would I. We're the kind of people for whom the Lord Jesus died. And you know what makes it all the more remarkable to me is that we're so nothing.

We look big now. I mean six foot, you know, 200 pounds. I'm not telling you the real weight.

But if you saw me from 10,000 feet, I'm not very big. You saw me from 100,000 feet, I'm about an amoeba. If you saw me from the heights of glory, forget it.

Nothing. Nothing. Jesus died for me.

I mean, that's the grace of God. You'll never appreciate grace until you're to realize we're infinitesimal. I cannot find words to describe how we're less than zero.

Okay, God loves us. And what it means for the believer, that's the fourth thing. You know, grace could have done less for us than it has done.

Grace could have just saved us from going to hell. And then we die, and that's it. Period.

That would have been great, wouldn't it? Christ wasn't satisfied to do that. Could have given us an unending life on earth. I'm glad it didn't.

When I go out to Bethesda and see people at 100 years old, I'm glad, you know. I don't want to live to be 100. It could have done less for us than it did.

The infirmities of age. God wasn't satisfied with any halfway measures. Having given his best in the gift of his Son, he was determined not to withhold any good from those who loved him.

He decided not, just think of it, he decided not to withhold the richest inheritance that his mind could conceive of. The richest inheritance that his mind couldn't conceive of. Just think about it.

The moment sinners received the Lord Jesus Christ, these are some of the things that we receive. We won't finish them today, all right? We won't finish them in eternity. Recipients of eternal life.

It's wonderful. It's wonderful. This priceless gift, and when we think of eternal life, we think about life that will never end.

It's not that. Unbelievers have life that will never end. This is a quality of life, isn't it? It's the life of Christ in Bill McDonald.

Incredible. That's what eternal life is. It's a more abundant life which the Lord Jesus promised to those who would trust him.

I say even the unsaved have endless existence, but only believers have Christ within them, the hope of glory. Natural life is received by birth and is subject to death. Eternal life is received by the new birth and is deathless.

Eternal life is nothing less than union with God, and I'm going to tell you that's astonishing. We don't think of it. We don't think about how rich we are.

Recipients of eternal life. Forgiven. By a miracle of grace, God forgives and removes the sins of the believers.

As far as the east is from the west. He's never going to remember them again. All the charges against the penitent were nailed to the cross of Calvary, and they're gone.

That's why a hymn writer could write those words, I hear the accuser roar of ills that I have done. I know them well and thousands more. Jehovah findeth none.

You like that? I hear the accuser roar of ills that I have done. I know them well and thousands more. Jehovah findeth none.

That's great, dear friend. I think I just want to stop there. Let's pray.

Father, we realize today how inadequate vocabulary is to describe the wonderful grace that you've shown to us. Oh, that we might never forget. Every moment of every day that we might be conscious of your presence with us.

The God of all grace who has called us to his eternal glory. Lord, for those who do not know the Savior.

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