

This is the True Grace of God

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the true grace of God in various aspects of Christian life. It highlights the importance of shepherding without seeking gain, ceasing from sin by suffering in the flesh, and leaders not lording over others but serving with humility. The message encourages believers to press on to perfection, seek holiness, and live in harmony with God's principles.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:2, 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 1:15, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Corinthians 16:12

Topics: "Grace of God", "Humble Leadership"

Description

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Transcript

Now, some of you may not know the reason why there are so many churches in the world. Some of you know. Well, I'll tell you why.

When there are so many churches existing, why does anybody start another church? Way back in the beginning, in the day of Pentecost, there was only one church. There was only one in Jerusalem on that day. And subsequently, as the apostles went around different places, you read about the church in this place or the church in that place.

There was only one. But by the time you come to the end of the first century, which is just 60 years after the day of Pentecost, you see the condition of the churches in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. And it's good for us to turn there and see how it was then. Turn with me to Revelation chapter 2. Just see the example of one church.

It says here, this is a church in Ephesus where it's the one church where Paul stayed for the longest time, three years. And he tells them, I don't have time to turn there in Acts 20, he said, I preached to you day and night for three years. Now three years is more than 1,000 days.

So, if Paul preached morning and evening, he preached 2,000 sermons in that church in Ephesus. Can you imagine sitting in a church where the Apostle Paul himself would preach every single day, morning

and evening? You know, John Wesley used to do that. He'd get up early in the morning at five o'clock and ride his horse to some place where there were people who wanted to have a meeting before they went to work, you know, working people.

And he'd have that meeting and come back in the evening, he'd have another meeting. So there are people who did preach twice a day for people who wanted to hear. And Paul did that in Ephesus for three years.

But yet, even before he left, he gave them a warning. He said, there are wolves waiting outside, trying to tear up the flock here. And they're just waiting for me to leave.

After I go, those wolves will come and tear up some of you. And he said, the tragedy is not just the wolves from outside, you read this in Acts 20, it's very challenging, that from your own midst, folks who have heard these 2,000 sermons of mine, some of you will have own personal ambitions to be known as a leader. Now that Paul is gone, there'll be a competition for leadership.

And some of you elders will not be happy to work with your fellow elders. And all this is in Acts 20, take time to read it sometime. But you will start competing with one another as elders to show that you can preach better than that person.

And you can preach better than the other person. And you will draw people after you, you know, after the meeting, you'll visit people and try to draw them after you. And the end result will be that in one church, there'll be little groups of people who are drawn by one elder or drawn by another elder, because they're not seeking the glory of Christ, they're seeking their own honor.

Well, that continued for some time, but usually what happens after a while is it splits. But anyway, by the time John was 95 years old, the Lord told him, tell the messenger, the word angel here means messenger. That means one of the elders was the main messenger in a church, usually among the elders.

One brother will be the main messenger. It's almost like that in every church. So tell the messenger of the church, I've got something against you.

The failure was in the messenger and therefore in the church. You see, it's like when a father fails, the children suffer. There are many good things in you.

The Lord appreciates that your deeds. Revelation 2, verse 2, your toil, your perseverance, you don't tolerate evil men, you put, test those who call themselves apostles and you found they're false. You have persevered, endured for my name's sake, you've not grown weary, such a lot of good qualities.

So on the right side of the balance, all the good qualities, quite a number of them. On the other side, you have left your first love. That means your love for me, which once there was a fervent love in your heart for me, you'd get up in the morning and the first thing you want to do was to talk to me.

It's like a couple who's newly in love with each other. And you'd want to read my word and hear me and cleanse your heart and seek to live. Ask for strength to live that day.

It's how you started your day. But now it's gone. You're still doing all these other things, activities, perseverance, exposing false teachers.

But your devotion to me has gone. Your personal devotion to me is gone. It's like a man telling his wife, you're doing a wonderful job.

When I see the way you keep the house so tidy, the meals, the trouble you take to cook every meal, perfect and tasty. And you're bringing up the children so well and keep everything in order. There's clothes to be repaired.

You do that and you organize everything in the home. You take care of the money that you don't waste too much money and every good quality in a wife. But he says, but the husband says, but you don't love me like you did in the beginning.

Remember the first time when we got married, how much you loved me with all your heart and we loved each other. We didn't have any children. We didn't have a big house.

We lived in a small place and we didn't earn much money, but we loved each other. And what a wonderful time we had. But now that is gone.

You're still doing all these other things, but your devotion to me has gone. And now it's sort of food's on the table. You can have it.

I was a bit hungry. So I ate before you came. He says that's something that's happened and the Lord says something like that has happened in our relationship with him and that failure there outweighs all the other good things that were done.

So the Lord says, I'm going to remove, verse 5, the lampstand out of your place. In other words, I'm going to de-recognize you as a church. Till now, you were the church of Jesus Christ.

But from now onwards, if you don't repent, I'm giving you one last chance. Repent of what? Lord, we've done all these other things. No, those are not as important.

It doesn't matter if some of those other things fail. It's like the husband telling the wife, I'm not much bothered if the house is not so perfectly tidy and the food is not so perfectly cooked. That's not the main thing for me.

The main thing is that we love each other. We have the bond of affection that we had when we first got married. That's gone.

What's the use of all these other things being in order? The life in our marriage is gone. It's happened to many, many married couples. And when that happens in a church and our devotion to Christ is gone, the Lord says you're a useless church.

You're a useless believer who's got all the right doctrines and you go to the right place, but you lost your first love for me. And that's a personal thing. Love for Christ is not something that another person can have because he's connected with you.

Just because there are one or two people here who fervently love the Lord doesn't mean you're also OK. You're not. It's an individual thing.

Maybe your wife loves the Lord fervently and you don't, or your husband loves the Lord fervently and you don't. So this, what we see here, this is the most important thing that the Lord looks for. And when you

read something like that and the Lord says, I'll remove your lampstand means you can still call yourself a church and put a board outside saying church.

But the Lord says, I've derecognized you. I'm not going to be in your midst anymore. You'll conduct your meetings.

You'll sing your songs. But Jesus says, I will not be there. I know I made a promise with two or three gathered in my name.

I'll be in the midst. But that is only possible if you're gathered by the Holy Spirit. It's not, you've got to read that verse very carefully, Matthew 18, 20.

It's not where two or three people gathered together in my name. No. Where two or three people are gathered together by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will gather together people when people love Jesus with all their heart.

He says, that's not going to be there. And I won't be there in your midst. And you know, the number of thousands of meetings going on in the world in the name of Jesus, they sing the same song.

They sing that Christ is not there. The most important characteristic of a Christian meeting is that Christ should be there. If he's not there, we're wasting our time.

I thought of that in relation to a Christian meeting, you know. In 1 Corinthians, we are seeing that there's another meeting. What is a mark that this is a New Testament church, that you had a New Testament meeting? 1 Corinthians 14, it says, when you all come together, it says in verse 23, the whole church assembles together.

The church may be 10 people or 200 people, but they assemble together. And everybody begins to rattle off in tongues. Even the unbelievers will say you're mad.

So if you go to a church, there are some like that, there are a number like that in the world today. And you find everybody yelling and screaming in tongues. The Holy Spirit says, call it a mad church.

It may have a denomination label, but that's not the label God gives. God says, that's a mad church. But that's not what they're supposed to be doing.

But if they preach God's word, prophesying is preach God's word. But if they prophesy, and more than one person prophesies God's word, and even others who don't know the Bible come in and hear they're convicted. The mark of a church where Jesus is there is not just there's a lot of preaching, but the preaching is of such a character that people are convicted of what they are missing in their life.

That's the only type of preaching that's worth hearing. If you find that God exposes something that's lacking in your life, when you go to a doctor to get a checkup, which is what we do on Sunday morning when we come to the church, it's no use your doctor just saying, OK, give me the fees. You're OK.

Everything's OK. Go home. You need a doctor who tells you exactly what's wrong.

All these values are OK, but this one's bad. There's something wrong with you, and here's the cure for it. That's what a good doctor would say, and that's how it should be in a church.

When we come to a meeting, we should be encouraged, of course, in many ways. But then if there's something lacking in our life or in our family life or in the way we are bringing up our children or the way we are doing our work in the office, if that's pointed out, that's a good church. It's like a good doctor.

So then when the secrets of his heart are disclosed, verse 25, that means he wonders, how in the world does this preacher know about this lack in my life? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he will worship God, saying, God is certainly among you. Look at that expression in verse 25. God is certainly in this church.

That is the mark of a New Testament church. Not what songs they sing, not how loudly the preacher shouts, and not how long the message is, none of these things. That man has met with God.

He goes away saying, boy, we met with the Lord today in the meeting, spoke to me. Dear brothers and sisters, that is the mark of a New Testament church. That's the only type of church I ever want to attend in my life.

Even if there are only 10 people, if the Lord is certainly here, and if I go to a church and I find consistently Sunday after Sunday, the Lord speaks to me, he's there. It's the only church I ever want to be in. All the other churches don't attract me anymore.

Or with their fancy strobe lights and music and all that, then the Lord is not there. Because if the Lord is there, it says he's convicted in his heart, verse 24, and everything he hears speaks to his heart. And he says, the Lord is here.

It's like a man with some spots on his shirt coming into the light and say, hey, I discovered there's some spots on my shirt. I was in the dark and I didn't see it. Now I can wash it off.

And when you come to a church meeting and you hear the word that shows you those spots in your heart, that you can cleanse yourself, that's a mark of being in a church where God is present. But if it's only a church where people keep you happy and teach, swing your hips and shake your head and sing, and the Lord is not there, you're wasting your time. That's not the type of church I want to be in.

So that's why in Ephesus, turn back to Revelation 2, there was a church where the Lord says, I've removed my presence. That means the meetings go on, the singing is going on, the Lord is not there anymore. The most important thing in a meeting, the Lord is not there anymore.

He says, I've removed the lampstand. But here's the hope there in the city of Ephesus. There are some, verse 7, who overcome.

He who has a year, verse 7, let him hear what the Spirit says. There are some in this church who are fed up with this backslidden condition of the church and who are seeking God on their own, their personal life. They are overcoming sin.

And what do you think those overcomers did? It says, the Lord says, I will remove the lampstand means that time came in that church in Ephesus when Jesus left. So I'm not going to be here anymore. Now, most of the people in the church are so dead spiritually, they don't even realize that Christ is not here anymore.

The songs are still being sung, that 500 people are still coming to the church and the lights are functioning well, all the flashlights and all they have on the stage nowadays. And the preacher still yells and shouts,

but Christ is not there. And the only people who recognize this are probably the nine or 10 overcomers who are sitting there who are wholehearted.

They say, hey, Jesus is not in this church anymore. He was here when we joined this church 20 years ago. He's not here now.

He's left. And those overcomers, what do they do then? What does the bride do when the bridegroom has left the wedding hall? She doesn't hang around there anymore. Hey, my bridegroom is walking out.

I'm going to walk out with him. And those overcomers would leave that church founded by the Apostle Paul in Ephesus and say, that's OK. Paul founded this 60 years ago or 50 years ago, but the Lord is not here anymore.

I've got to leave. And they go out and meet separately, maybe 10 of them in some house. Usually they can't afford to build a building or anything.

And the Lord is there because the Lord wants a witness in every town. And if you can't find it in this place, where all those fancy fittings and all are there, you'll find where there are overcomers. He gathers with those who overcome sin.

They're called the overcomers. And you read through Revelation two and three in every church, he says about overcomers, overcomers, overcomers. He is meeting with those who want to overcome sin in their life, in every place.

And when that message of overcoming disappears in a church, God withdraws. So there, at one time, there was only one church in Ephesus, now there are two. The one is the big 500 one, 500 member church where the Lord is not there.

And the other is a small group of 10 meeting with the Lord is there. And the big 500 member church says, all these rebels who left, they are not fit. We excommunicate them.

We have nothing more to do with them. They're on their way to hell. They call Jesus Beelzebul, prince of devils.

And it's not surprising if they call this group that is really the overcomers, the one whom the Lord recognized, were called by the big churches, rebels and people who try to split the church and all types of bad names. But the Lord is there. And that happened in the first century, towards the end of it, it happened that gradually, century after century, churches would come up.

You know, somebody, for example, this new group that started now with 10 people, really blessed and a few people gathered together. And this 10 group of 10 grows to one day, 500, maybe another 50, 60 years. And they backslide, the same story is repeated.

And some other group, because the original 10 people who started it probably died. And this, the people are left there are backslidden and another group of overcomers come, they pull out. Now there are three churches in Ephesus.

This is how churches are multiplied through the years. And this is why there are thousands today after 2000 years. It's the Lord himself who's taken out people, taken out people, always looking for those who will proclaim the full message that Christ and the apostles preached.

And that's why we have this church here today. And that's why there were, there was a bit of a division here five years ago. It's exactly what happened in Ephesus.

The Lord pulled out some people and the Lord pulled out some people here. And to form a church that would be a testimony to his name. And I know I was here for the first 14 years with another group.

And I've been here for the last five years with this. And I'll tell you, you may not know because you were not here for, in 2004. And I was, and I can tell you there's a world of difference between the two.

A really a world of difference. The message is different. This fellowship is different.

And I see that the Lord is here and I pray that the Lord will continue to be here. And in order for that to happen, we need to ask ourselves, what is it that the Lord is emphasizing here? Overcome, overcome. So in the new covenant, we cannot overcome without the grace of God.

That is how a person becomes an overcomer. Turn with me to Romans in chapter six. Our favorite verse, Romans 6, 14.

It's on the basis of this that we have established every single CFC church in any part of the world. Sin will not reign in your body. Verse 12, sin will not be master over you.

For you're not under law, but under grace. It's a very important verse. If sin is ruling in your body, like it says in verse 12, sin reigning in a person's body, then sin is master over you.

Then, I mean, you can go to a 10-year-old, ask him a question. Okay, I'll say, son, I want to read a verse to you. Tell me the answer.

You are not under law, but under grace. Therefore, sin does not rule over you. Tell me, how do you know whether a person is under grace? He says, sin does not rule over him.

How do you know he's under law? Sin rules over him. It's that simple. It's like two plus two is four.

Sin rules over a people who have not fully come under the grace of God. Sin cannot rule over someone who's come under the grace of God fully. Everybody sitting here can decide.

Are you under law or under grace? I took that seriously only 16 years after I was converted. Even though it was there, I'd read it. Well, it didn't mean anything to me.

And that's when I realized that a lot of churches I was going to was not preaching the grace of God at all, or partial grace. Ephesians chapter two, let's turn to Ephesians chapter two. This is where we begin our Christian life.

We're not saved by good works that we do. Ephesians two, verse eight and nine also speaks about grace. By grace, you have been saved through faith.

And that grace is now being defined here. Not by yourself, but as a gift of God. That means your salvation is not something you struggled and attained the forgiveness of sins because you changed your mind and you said, no, no, no, it is a gift of God.

Now, if you pay for a gift, it's no longer a gift. If somebody gave you a gift and you handed them \$1, it's not a gift anymore. Gift is one where it says in verse nine, no works.

It's not because you added some work that you are forgiven. No, it is the grace of God. So the first part of God's grace is to be freely forgiven.

Without our doing anything, we just accept a gift. Yeah, you have to stretch out your hand, of course. You know, I look at this when it says here in verse eight, by grace, you have been saved.

It doesn't stop there. It says through faith. So is faith a work? Is that a payment I'm making to get God's grace? No, look at it like this.

Grace is God's hand reaching out from heaven, saying, I wanna forgive you. I wanna make you my child. I have to pay anything for it, Lord? No, nothing.

Any good works? No, it's free. But you gotta take it. And faith is my hand reaching up and saying, thank you, Lord.

When I reach out and take it, is that a payment? No, I'm receiving. What God gives freely. If somebody gives you a gift, and you don't stretch out your hand, it'll never be yours.

So this is by grace, through faith, I receive it. So this is the first part of the grace of God that we experience. That I come to God and say, Lord, there's absolutely nothing I can do to be saved from God's judgment.

This is talking about being saved from God's judgment. God's judgment is on all sin, and all the multitudes of sins that we've committed. There's a judgment of God on it, whether we know it or not.

And God wants to save us from it. That's the first part of the grace of God. And it's not by works.

You cannot get that deliverance from God's judgment by any number of works you do. It is by grace, sheer grace. Not a result of works.

Otherwise one person will boast that I've done more than you. And if there's any boasting in your having received forgiveness of sins, you can be sure it's a fake. If you say you paid something for it, you can't pay anything for it.

Absolutely free. The worst sinner and the one who's not such a bad sinner are both given forgiveness of sins equally freely. The one who committed 100 billion sins and the one who committed maybe only 5 billion sins.

Both are equally forgiven. That's grace. But the second part of grace, this is the first part.

The second part of grace is what we read in Romans 6.14. Now, when you're under grace, sin will not rule over you. The first is about sin being forgiven, your past sin. And here is sin ruling over us.

And there is, I look at it like this. If the grace of God can be represented by a human body and you cut the body right down the middle and take one half and say, I got grace. You didn't.

That's not a complete body. You got the forgiveness part of grace, Ephesians 2.8. That's grace too. This is part of a human body.

What will you do with a half a human body? There are a million things you can't do. Yeah, there's one eye, one ear and all that. But that's not the way God intended a human body to be.

And that's not the way God intended grace to be. Just one half. By grace, I'm saved through faith.

I got it not with my works. I got forgiveness of sins. What about the other side of grace? Something missing.

Now, none of you would want to have a child with half a body coming out of the mother's womb. No. You'd say that's not a proper child.

Thank God that babies are born with a full body. But many Christians, who claim to be Christians, have received grace with half a body. They're happy with it.

It's ridiculous to think that a father and mother would be happy with this child which has only got half a body in it. And yet there are multitudes of Christians who are very happy. I've got grace.

My sins are forgiven. Brother, sister, that's only one side of grace. You got a half a body.

And the devil's made you happy with it when you should not be happy with it. If you got a child like that, you would not be happy. Why in the world are you happy with half of God's grace? The devil is called a thief.

What does he steal? He doesn't steal money. He gives loads of money to people to lead them away from God. What he steals is your understanding of God's grace.

And I want to ask you, all of you sitting here, personally, has the devil robbed you of some part of the grace of God? Or to use another example, if your dad was a very wealthy man and left you a huge inheritance, and some crooked lawyer made sure you got only half of it, would you be happy? And that guy stole the other half? Yeah, in those things, we are so careful. I want to see my father's will. You tell the lawyers, show me the father's will.

Let me see what he wrote. He's written so much here. Now, do you give me only so much? I wonder whether we go to God like that.

Say, Lord, your word says not only that I'll be forgiven by the grace of God, but that sin will not rule over me. Why is this particular sin still ruling over me? And you name the sin, this particular thing, which I keep on, keep on, keep on committing, even though my sins are forgiven. What's happened to the other half of my body? Why is this child born only with half a body? Lord, I want a proper child.

I want the full grace of God, not a part of it. And that's why it's important, brothers and sisters. I'm not trying to humiliate anyone.

I'm not trying to challenge anyone. I'm trying to tell you what your inheritance is, where Jesus paid such a tremendous price to buy for you. And you're insulting the Christ who died on the cross when you don't make an effort to take all of that inheritance.

You're insulting Christ when you let the devil rob some of that inheritance from you, which is your rightful inheritance. Let me turn you now to 1 Peter. You know, this is not something true of just the 20th century or 21st century.

It's true in the first century. Even then, a false grace was being proclaimed. False grace is half grace.

That's a false grace, which is not the full grace of God. And so even at that time, the apostles had to correct it. This is the reason why God suddenly raises up a new church, because he says the other people are proclaiming only half the grace, so God raises up someone to proclaim the full grace of God.

Here's a church that, for example, says you got to worship Mary and you'll be forgiven. Well, that's crazy. The apostles never said that.

And you'll be forgiven if you give so much money to the church. Well, God raised up a man called Martin Luther in the 1500s to proclaim that that was a lie. That's not how you get forgiveness.

And so he started another church, which is known as the Protestant church, the Protestant movement. But then we found that even the followers of Luther, they never preached baptism. They would sprinkle little babies and say they are children of God because they were sprinkled with water in a little tub.

And so God had to raise up other people who proclaimed baptism. And then there were people who proclaimed only forgiveness of sins and no victory. God had to raise up someone like John Wesley to proclaim that you can be an overcomer, you can overcome sin.

So throughout history, if you read church history, God has always raised up different people, and then there's a new church. And that's how CFC started 48 years ago, because we found some part of the grace of God is missing. And that's the reason why five years ago, a group of people here decided to make this a new church.

It's important to understand that. So thank God that whenever God sees a decline, he does something to start a new fellowship, even if it's in the same building. So I want you to turn now to 1 Peter chapter five.

I was telling you this happened even in the first century. Peter wrote a letter with five chapters, very, very short letter. But at the end of it, he gives a title to this book.

He says, what I've written is a letter. And the title is 1 Peter five, verse 12, the middle of that verse. I have written to you briefly, means only five chapters, it's not 500 chapters.

I've written to you briefly, exhorting, exhorting means challenging, and testifying the truth. This is the true grace of God. It's like, you know, when you take \$100 note and tell someone, this is a genuine \$100 note.

Why do you have to add the word genuine? Because there are fake \$100 bills as well. That's why if there were not a single fake \$100 bill in the world, you wouldn't have to say this is a genuine \$100 note. It's because there are fake \$100 notes that you have to say this is a genuine one.

So when Peter says in the first century, after writing five chapters saying, this is the true grace of God, it means even then, forget about now, even then, there was a false grace being proclaimed by many people. So when I read that as the title that Peter gives to his letter, well, I want to go through that letter carefully to understand whether I have got the true grace of God or not. Or have I been fooled with a counterfeit bill? And I think I'm rich and I've got all the pile of \$100 bills in my house and every one of them is counterfeit.

I want to discover it now. If you've got the counterfeit grace of God, it's better to discover it now, not after Christ comes. This is very serious.

So I just want to show you a few verses in 1 Peter. This is the true grace of God. First of all, he says, you were, verse one and two, those who are residents of scattered here, and you can say scattered also in

Loveland, Colorado, in that first verse, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God by the sanctifying work of the Spirit to obey Jesus Christ sprinkled with his blood.

Chosen by God when? Before he created the world, before Genesis chapter one, verse one, where it says, in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. Before that, he chose you by name. How? He didn't just pick out names out of a hat and say, okay, these guys are going to heaven, the others are going to go to hell.

I'm sorry to say, there are some Christians who teach that, that God in his sovereignty just picked out certain people and they're going to go to heaven. And if you're one of those chosen, you'll go to heaven. If you're not, I'm sorry, brother.

In fact, you're not my brother. Sorry, you won't make it. Can you imagine a God like that? That's a false God.

There's no partiality with God. And yet there are Christians who teach that, and a lot of Christians who teach that, who say God sovereignly chooses, it's got nothing to do with you. And because he sovereignly chose you, you repented and you believe you happen to come in.

I say that would be a very unfair way in which God, that's not the God I worship. And that teaches that if God's chosen you, then it doesn't matter how you live. Once saved, you're always saved.

That teaching has sent more people to hell than almost any other teaching, that you can never be lost. And yet Jesus said in Matthew 24, he who endures to the end will be saved. And in Hebrews it says, take heed brethren, brethren, Hebrews chapter three, lest there be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart to depart from the living God.

Can that happen to a believer? Let me read it to you in Hebrews chapter three. He's writing to believers. Hebrews chapter three, verse 12.

Dear brothers, ancestors, please take care, he says. Whom is he writing to? The whole world? No, he's writing to brethren. Hebrews 3, 12.

Take care that there's not in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart. Can a believer end up with an evil, unbelieving heart? Well, the Holy Spirit thinks so, even if you don't. To fall away from the living God.

Can a believer, brethren, verse 12, fall away from the living God? There are Christians who say that can never happen. Well, you're contradicting the Holy Spirit, brethren, not contradicting me. You're contradicting the Holy Spirit.

That's why I say this once saved, always saved doctrine has sent more people to hell than probably any other. God sovereignly chose you, and that's it. That is not found in the Bible.

I believe God sovereignly chose me, but one Peter says it is by foreknowledge. I believe he chose me. He chose me before Genesis 1, verse 1, but Peter explains it is the one verse in the Bible.

As far as I know, it's the only verse in the New Testament that clearly teaches how God chose us, not at random picking out names. According to the foreknowledge of God, that means God looked into the future, and he saw that you would repent and receive Christ, and so he chose your name. It had nothing to do with God's random, meaningless choice.

According to the foreknowledge of God, he knew exactly what you would do in the 20th century or 21st century. It's wonderful to know that. That's where the grace of God begins.

This is the true grace of God. And then I just wanna show you a few verses. What is the true grace of God? 1 Peter 1, verse 15 and 16.

Like the Holy One who called you, you must also be holy in all your behavior. Because it is written, you shall be holy. Why? Because I am holy, says the Lord.

This is the true grace of God. This is the title Paul has, Peter has given to his letter. This is the true grace of God.

You shall be holy only for one reason, because I'm holy, God says, and you're my children. And further, it says in chapter two, there are many, many things I won't have time to go into all of it. Verse 21 of chapter two.

You have been called for this purpose. What is that? Christ suffered for you. You're also called for suffering.

In the true grace of God, Christians suffer from non-Christians. They'll treat you in a bad way. They will make life difficult for you because you're a Christian.

Oh, we experienced a lot of that in India. I remember when I was working in the Navy, I had non-Christian bosses above me who were senior officers in the Navy. And when I stood up for Christ, they made life difficult for me.

They almost sent me to prison once because I stood up for Christ and said, sir, I can't do that as a Christian. And it didn't happen because the person above him was a Roman Catholic and he had a little fear of God, so he didn't allow me to be sent to prison. God is sovereign.

That happened to me twice. And every time, the top man was a Roman Catholic, so he had a little fear of God and he did not allow me to be punished. But other people, the man in between was a non-Christian.

And because I stood up for Christ, once they transferred me, in half an hour I got a transfer of my job. I said, fine. I hope you have experienced a few little, I don't call them sufferings, they're all little pinpricks, not really worth being called as any serious suffering compared to the people who were eaten by lions and all in the first century.

So we have been called for this purpose, it says in verse 21. Now, if you were to ask the average Christian, to what purpose have you been called? He says, to go to heaven. Agreed.

But before you get there, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that, why did he suffer? Because he never committed a sin, verse 22. He hated sin. And it's because we stand for the truth and refuse to do something wrong, we refuse to sign a false statement in the office, we refuse to do something unrighteous, non-Christians will make you suffer.

Hey, what does it matter? It doesn't matter, do this. Everybody's doing it. Well, everybody's doing it is not any excuse for me because everybody's going to hell.

That's no excuse for me that everybody else does it. I'm going to be different because I'm a Christian. My dear brothers and sisters, if you've never experienced in your life even once, some type of earthly loss because you're a Christian, because you stand up for the truth, you ask yourself whether you're really following the Lord or not.

I mean, everybody will suffer some type of loss from non-Christians who try to make life a little difficult for them. So it says Christ suffered for us. And when they reviled him, verse 23, he did not revile in return.

He did not insult back. This is the true grace of God, where somebody insults you and you quietly take it. You bow your head and you keep quiet.

This is the true grace of God. Have you experienced it? Where people mock you and make fun of you and you keep quiet and say, okay, God bless you. He kept entrusting himself to the one who judges righteously.

Okay, let's move on. This is the true grace of God. Where, chapter three, verse one, where wives are submissive to their husbands.

This is the true grace of God. A wife being submissive to her husband, not adorning herself with all types of fancy worldly forms of adornment, verse three, but with that imperishable quality, verse four, of a gentle and a quiet spirit, which God considers very precious. He's saying that the world considers gold jewelry, verse three, and fancy dresses very precious, but God considers a gentle and quiet spirit very precious.

He's comparing what the world values and what God values, and this is what God values is imperishable. He says, even the gold jewelry will perish one day, but a gentle and a quiet spirit in a wife is something that's of great value. And he says, this is how, in the olden times, the women adorned themselves with this spirit, like Sarah, verse six, who obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, and you'll become her children if you do what is right.

This is the true grace of God, where a wife has learned to behave like this type of wife described here. But that's not all. He says, the true grace of God is where husbands in the home, verse seven, live in an understanding way with their wife.

What do they need to understand? They need to understand, very important, number one, that the wife is a weaker vessel. Now, many husbands don't know that. Why does she cry so easily? I say, because she's a woman, she's a weaker vessel.

Why does she seem to trip up so easily in some words? She's a weaker vessel. When a husband says, I never do that, tells his wife, why do you do that? I'll tell you why, because she's a weaker vessel. Many husbands have not understood that.

And the Bible says this is the true grace of God when a husband understands that, that he bears with his wife with her weaknesses because she's a weaker vessel. He doesn't equate her with himself, saying, if I can do that, why can't you do that? It's like a heavy suitcase. You're traveling somewhere and you tell your wife, why can't you lift it? I can lift it.

You never do that because you realize even physically your wife is weaker. So we are careful in something like that, but what about other areas in our relationship at home? Do you realize that it's because she's weaker that she's reacting like that? Maybe you don't react like that, but all because you're

a man. God made you stronger.

The grace of God, I already told you the grace of God in a wife. Here's the grace of God in a husband, that he recognizes that his wife is a weaker vessel. And not only that, he recognizes, verse seven, last part, she's a fellow heir with me.

That means she's, I'm the king, agreed, in the house, but she's the queen. She's not a servant. She's not a maidservant.

She is a queen. This is the true grace of God where a husband has recognized that. She's not the king, agreed, but she's a queen.

Fellow heir of the grace of life. That means there are two thrones in both the same level. One is the king's throne and the queen's throne.

So a husband who does not treat his wife like a queen, but treats her like a maidservant, he hasn't understood the grace of God at all. Whatever he may talk about, forgiveness and wonderful things in the church and sings beautiful songs, if he doesn't treat his wife like a queen, he's not understood the grace of God. Just like if the wife does not know how to submit to her husband, she hasn't understood the grace of God.

So the grace of God changes your home life. It changes the character of the home. And that's what enables children to grow up in a godly way.

The foundation for children growing up in a godly way is not instructing them in scripture and all first, but husband and wife behaving like this with the grace of God. Then the grace of God will flow through them to their children. It's very practical.

Okay, the true grace of God. Let's move on to chapter four. The true grace of God is where we arm ourselves.

Chapter four, verse one. It's an armor. You read about the armor against the devil in Ephesians six, put on the whole armor of God.

Many Christians know only that part of the full armor of God. Here it also says about the armor of God. I must arm myself with the same purpose that Jesus had who suffered in the flesh.

Because if you do that, I'll stop sinning. If you, we'll stop sinning. Chapter four, verse one is telling us how we can stop sinning.

Don't we all want to stop sinning? Put on the same armor that Jesus had. And this is an armor. When my flesh tempts me, I'm gonna suffer, not enjoy.

Every temptation is as it were, you can enjoy this, the devil says. If you don't take it, you'll suffer. It'll be a struggle and painful.

And the Holy Spirit says Christ chose the way of suffering. That's why he never sinned. And you sin because you choose the way of pleasure.

There is pleasure in every sin. Whether it's making money, whether it's lusting after women, whether it's yelling back at someone who's hurting you, there's a pleasure in it. You know that, you've done it.

Where you got upset with somebody and yelled back at him and you got a little pleasure out of making him feel small. Jesus didn't do it. He refused that pleasure.

That's called suffering in the flesh. You feel like saying something, your flesh says, come on, give him back in the same way he gave you. You say no.

I will die to that reaction. That's a form of suffering. I've got to crush something inside me.

And if I do that in the power of the Holy Spirit, he says, verse one, I'll stop sinning. Isn't that a wonderful promise? He who has suffered in the flesh has stopped sinning. So why am I sinning in some area again and again? Because I don't want to suffer in the flesh there.

I want enjoyment and suffering are opposite. And there's a certain pleasure we get out of a certain thought pattern. I get a pleasure out of that thinking, whether it's sexual thoughts or thoughts to make more money or any type of thoughts which give me a lot of pleasure.

And that's what leads me into a lot of sin. The opposite of that is suffering. I deny myself that I don't want that pleasure because I can't imagine Jesus lying down in bed and always thinking about how to make more money or Jesus even being thinking for a moment about lust, completely out of the question.

And the way he did it was not because he was not tempted. The Bible says he was tempted exactly like you are. Think of any temptation you have faced in your life.

The Bible says he was tempted exactly like that. Hebrews 4, 15. That's the verse that helped me.

I used to always have an excuse for my failure in sin, even as a believer, till I learned that Jesus was tempted exactly like me, but did not sin. He did not overcome his God. If he overcame his God, he cannot say, follow me.

I'd say, I can't follow you, I'm not God. But he did not overcome with his power of God. He overcame by suffering in the flesh when he was tempted, even something like turning the stones into bread because he's so hungry.

And he says, I won't do it until I hear a word from God asking me to do it. No, I mean, I thought there were rocks in that desert where Jesus was being tempted. If he used his supernatural power to turn one of those rocks into bread, he's not depriving anybody.

It's not like going and stealing bread from a shop. There was a dead rock there. He converted it into bread and he started eating it.

He said, no, even that I won't do if my father doesn't tell me. It's amazing the way Jesus obeyed the smallest little thing. He wouldn't go somewhere unless prompted by the father.

Now, that's a very high level of obedience and you can't get there overnight. You take step by step by step by step by step. You see some of these great mathematics geniuses.

They didn't get there from kindergarten one step up there. From kindergarten to that, becoming a mathematics genius was many, many, many long steps they get up there. That's how they got there.

Or some expert who fixes a computer problem. You have a computer problem and you get this expert and then he fixes it in one minute. What you've been struggling with for one hour.

It took many years for him to get there. Or somebody who you go to a garage and somebody fixes your car, which you've been struggling with and he fixes it in two minutes. It's many, many years before they got there to that knowledge.

It's the same thing that the Christian life. Overcoming sin is like that. If you start with the small things, little by little by little from the kindergarten, you can go up to the place where the strongest sins that are defeating you today, you can overcome them.

There's not a single sin that God wants you to be overcome by. Nothing. When the Bible says don't do this, he's offering you the power to live that life.

If you're willing to suffer in the flesh. It says he who suffers in the flesh ceases from sin. This is the true grace of God.

The true grace of God is where you're willing to suffer in the flesh so that you never sin in your life, not even once. As I said, you don't get that overnight. By step by step by step, we press towards the mark of perfection.

You know, because we preach such a strong message of overcoming sin, a lot of people accuse us saying, oh, you guys think you're perfect. So in our church building back in Bangalore, we have a verse written on the pulpit behind which we stand and preach. Let us press on to perfection so that everybody realizes this man standing up here is not claiming to be perfect.

He's still pressing on to perfection. So we're not ones who claim to be perfect. We're saying we're pressing on.

Some are at step one, some are at step two, some are at step 10, some are at step 25, depending on how faithful they've been. You're pressing on to perfection, but this is the grace of God to completely cease from sin. Okay, one more thing before I finish.

Elders, what is the true grace of God in an elder or leader of a church? Chapter five, verse one to three. Two things I wanna emphasize. A true elder is one who shepherds, verse two, the flock of God.

The last part of verse two, not for money. In the true grace of God, an elder will not be a pastor for a salary. And yet the Christian world today is full of people.

There are churches in advertise, we want a pastor, just like company says, we want a new CEO. Our old CEO is leaving, we want a new CEO. And there are people who will suggest various names.

Okay, let him come and preach one sermon here. We find out and then that man will ask you, the company, what is your salary? Then only I'll decide whether to join you or not. It's the same way a pastor is hired in a church, the pastor asks the church, what's my salary going to be? Then I'll decide whether I come and pastor this church or not.

And if I'm a very gifted preacher, I can demand a high salary. If you're a pretty useless preacher, then you don't get a low salary. This is exactly like the CEOs in companies, not for gain.

This is the true grace of God. The true grace of God produces pastors and leaders and elders who do not work for money. Secondly, verse three, they are not people who try to control other people's lives.

They don't lord it over others saying, you got to do it the way I told you. I know there are some pastors even go around saying, you must marry this girl. God has shown me.

I say, God will show you. That's what I say. I'm not here to tell you.

A lot of people come to me and used to come to me in Bangalore for advice. And I sit there and talk to them for 20 minutes explaining to him, this is what I think you should do. They asked me for advice.

I don't give it without asking me. And then I tell them, now, when you go home, please don't do what I said, told you. What I told you, you must take before God.

Because you have a connection with the head. I'm not your head. I gave you some advice, take it before God and say, brother Zach told me this, Lord, shall I do it or not? And if you don't feel free in your spirit to do it, please don't do it.

Tell me tomorrow, brother Zach, I don't feel free to do what you told me to do. I'll be delighted because that'll show me your connection is not with me, but with the head. But if you blindly do what I say, oh, brother Zach said this, so I'll do it.

I won't be happy. You'll go astray. And I pray you'll go astray so that you don't ruin your life further by just blindly following a man.

There is no man who comes, there's no mediator between you and Christ. Christ is the one mediator between God and man. And he is not appointed another mediator.

You don't have to go to a man to find God's will. You can get advice, but take that advice and go to the Lord and say, Lord, this is the advice this godly man has said, should I do it or not? And you don't feel free in your spirit, don't do it. Do it when you feel free in your spirit.

I'll give you an example of a great apostle Paul. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. You know, the Corinthian church had tremendous lacks.

It was one of the worst churches. A lot of complaints, there were people living in adultery and taking others to court and all that. And Paul felt there's one man who really knows the scriptures.

Let me send him there, he'll bless this church, Apollos. So he told Apollos, 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 12, Apollos, our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren. He said, hey, brother Apollos, you should go.

You are needed in Corinth, man. I'm urging you, I'm an apostle of Christ. I'm urging you as an apostle of Christ, go to Corinth, build up that church.

You know what Apollos said? No, I don't feel like going right now. Can you imagine turning to the apostle Paul and saying, sorry, I'm not gonna go right now. Does Paul get offended? Does Paul put his foot down

and say, no, you must go because I'm an apostle? No, Paul had the wisdom to recognize that he was not a mediator between Apollos and Christ.

So he says, he'll come whenever he feels led by God. That's the meaning of he'll come when he has opportunity. I love that verse.

I say, Lord, make me like that because I'm also a leader of many believers. And when some young brother says, brother Zach, I don't feel free to do that, I say, praise God. I'm glad you're in touch with Christ and that I'm not your mediator.

Live like that, brother. And I'll tell you the last part of it. Supposing he doesn't listen to me and he messes up his life in some way.

And he comes to me and tells me what happened. I will never tell him, I told you so. That's the voice of the expert.

What I'll say is, nevermind, brother, let's fix it. There's no problem that we cannot fix. God will help us.

I say that to your parents also. When your children are stubborn, when they're trying to do something, you're trying to wanna help them and they say, no, no, no, I'll do that myself. Whether it's fixing their bicycle or younger children trying to build something with Lego or something like that.

And they say, I'll do it. And they say, no, no, no, I can do it. And they mess it all up.

And they come to you. Never say to them, I told you so. Those words must never come out of the mouth of a parent when they're helping.

Maybe one of your girls is trying to help in the cooking and they messed up something because they wouldn't listen to your advice. Never say, I told you so. That's the voice of the expert.

It'll drive people away. Build fellowship with them. You know what you should say? Nevermind, darling, let's fix it.

Let's fix it. That should be the answer. So that's what I would tell a brother who didn't listen to me and messed up his life.

I say, it's okay. That's not the end of the world. God can solve any problem.

I believe with all my heart that there's no problem that God cannot solve. Even if you did something wrong, He can fix it. Amen.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we live in a world where most people know nothing of the grace of God and many others who speak about the grace of God are abusing it. Many leaders take advantage of others in the midst of such a Christendom.

Help us to walk in humility, not judging them, but judging ourselves and to present to you a heart of wisdom at the end of our lives and to build a church that will glorify you. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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