

THE GRACE OF GOD

Sermon by Mark Aites

TEXT: EPH. 2:8-9 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*
2:9 *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

INTRODUCTION:

1. Grace is a subject which cannot be understood and appreciated without truly understanding man's need for salvation.

2. Sin literally means to "miss the mark."

1 John 3:4 *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

1 John 5:17 *All unrighteousness is sin...*

3. "Though men differ greatly in the nature and extent of their sinfulness, there is absolutely no difference between the best and worst of men, in the *fact* that "all have sinned." (David Brown)

4. "The grace of God is meaningless to anyone who fails to see both the fact and the enormity of man's sins." (James Tolle)

5. We all sin, and the enormity of our sin is seen in the fact that none of us here deserves to be in the presence of God.

6. As a matter of fact, on our own, we stand condemned before God.

1) Song: *"I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned unclean."*

2) If it were not for God's love, and mercy through Christ, there would not be even a glimmer of hope for salvation.

3) If God had not sent Christ, no matter how many good deeds we would do, it would never be enough to warrant heaven (**Eph. 2:8-9**).

4) In a simple matter of justice, without Christ we deserve separation from God for all eternity.

7. We will never be able to truly appreciate the grace of God until we see where we would be without it.

8. If you really want to understand grace you must understand the penalty there would be without it.

DISCUSSION:

I. DEFINED. (Quotes--Tolle's work, *The Grace of God*.)

- A. The background of the word *charis*, which is translated grace has many aspects which help us to appreciate its significance.
1. For example, in ancient Greek classical writings, it referred to "that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favorable regard."
 2. It also was used in regard to speech to that which was edifying or uplifting. Paul himself used that aspect of grace in his writings.

Eph. 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

3. Elsewhere, the Greek word which translates grace meant, "the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving-kindness, good will generally." This aspect of the word was used in reference to Jesus when but a child.

Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

4. It also meant the gratitude that one would feel for favors that he would receive. For example: "May it be granted us to continue for ever to acknowledge our thanks to Him because He was gracious..."
5. If you will note, all of the definitions are in a favorable light -- grace being something wonderful, particularly for the recipient.

- B. In a spiritual context, as it is used concerning God's relationship to man:

1. **Grace** - the unmerited, undeserved favor of God.

Rom. 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

- 1) "Free gift," is from a Greek word which is a variation of *charis*; it is charisma (from which we get *charismatic*).
- 2) It means a "grace gift" or "unmerited gift."
2. **Titus 3:5** *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

3. This abundant grace and mercy bestowed upon us, is because “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8).
1 John 4:19 “*We love him, because he first loved us.*”

II. DECISION.

- A. It is difficult to understand the depth of God’s love, grace, and mercy.

Eph. 3:17-19 *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,*

18 *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*

19 *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

- B. In the depth of God’s love, the decision to send the Christ was made even before the creation.

1. God had already proposed to extend His grace for He knew that man would sin.

Eph. 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*

Acts 2:23 *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*

2. In the beauty of God’s love, He determined to send His only begotten Son.

John 3:16-17 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

3:17 *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

- C. We are mindful also in the grace of God, the decision of the Christ.
 1. Being with the Father from eternity, He obeyed the Father and came into this world as a sacrifice for our sins.

John 1:1-2,14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

1:2 *The same was in the beginning with God.*

1:14 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

John 17:5 *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Phil. 2:6-7 *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

- 1) One of the greatest decisions and out-pouring of grace is seen in this text.
 - 2) **Phil. 2:7** KJV: *But made Himself of no reputation* (does not allow you to truly understand the significance of this text).
 - 3) In the Greek, the word picture conveys that Jesus emptied Himself: (best illustrated with pitcher of water and the contents being poured out).
2. Song--Chorus: *"How marvelous! how wonderful! And my song shall ever be: how marvelous! How wonderful, Is my Savior's love for me!"*

III. GRACE MANIFESTED.

- A. When God's only begotten Son came into the world He was offered on the cross as the propitiation for our sins.

1 John 2:1-2 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1. *Propitiation* - atonement, expiation, in effect, to make amends, reparation or compensation.
2. Christ offered Himself as the atonement for sin.
3. The word "expressly designates in its reference to Christ the means whereby sin is covered and remitted so that the wrath of God can be appeased." (To propitiate refers to the idea of turning away wrath.) And then further states: "Unless sin is forgiven thru the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, divine justice demands that it receive its just recompense of reward in eternal death." (Tolle)
4. In other words, the sins that separate us from God, unless atoned for, will cause us to face divine justice, and will ultimately cause us to be lost

for all eternity.

B. So what is required is what we term “reconciliation.”

1. It is interesting that it is defined as, “To reestablish a close relation.”
2. Isaiah tells us that our sins separate us from God.

Isa. 59:1-2 *Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:*

59:2 *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

3. Because of our sins, without Christ, we cannot have a close relationship with God. That is lost when we sin!
4. Something therefore must appease the wrath of God to bring us back into a close relationship with God.
5. Jesus therefore offered Himself as a substitutionary offering.

2 Cor. 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

6. In turn, man then is given *the ministry of reconciliation*; the knowledge of the actions he must take to receive the merits of God's grace.

B. And John then explains that the wonderful grace of God that was manifested, in this great offering of Christ, to reconcile us to God, was universal in application; *for the sins of the whole world.*”

Heb. 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

1. The phrase *for every man*, is in the neuter gender literally referring to the entire human race.
2. Jesus tasted or experienced suffering and death; He laid down His life, and for such was *crowned with glory and honour*.

C. Through the sacrifice of Christ man was therefore afforded redemption.

1. The word *redemption*, as defined by Thayer, means, “a releasing affected by payment of a ransom.”

2. When Christ died on the cross, and shed His blood, He paid the debt incurred because of sin.
 3. Without Christ we are *sold under sin* (**Rom. 7:14**). Without Christ we are *slaves of sin*, under bondage (**Rom. 6:17**).
 4. Paul writes to Titus that Jesus *gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity* (**Tit. 2:14**).
- D. The key in God's grace, that affords redemption, and brings reconciliation is the blood of Christ.
1. God manifested His abundant grace when Jesus shed His blood at Calvary.

1 Pet. 1:18-19 *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*
 2. There are some things which truly can be redeemed with silver and gold; but it is only the blood of Christ that can redeem man from sin.
 3. Here again we are impressed with just how bad sin really is; that the only thing that could take it away, and pay the price for our sins, was the blood of God's only begotten Son.
- E. Paul conveyed this so well to the church at Ephesus.
1. He told them that without Christ they *were dead in trespasses and sins* (**Eph. 2:1**).

Eph. 2:12-13 *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.
13 But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh (brought near) by the blood of Christ."*
 2. "He who is *rich* in mercy, for His *great* love wherewith He loved us" has redeemed and saved us through the blood of Christ by an unmerited favor that is more than ordinarily rich but that is designated as "the exceeding riches of His grace." Such a grace is rich beyond all riches of the material world, just as "the glory of His grace" is beyond all the glories of the world." (Ibid.)

IV. GRACE EXTENDED AND ACCESSED.

Tit. 2:11 *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*

A. Even though Christ offered Himself as atonement for all men's sins it does not mean that everyone will be saved.

1. The idea of it *bringing salvation*, is such in the original that it does not indicate an actuality, but a possibility.
2. Hastings illustrated it this way: "If the medicine stands on the shelf, in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine; it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where it is not applied. Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not the slightest degree affected by the fact that, where it is not taken, its benefits are not realized."
3. If you bought a gift for someone, and they did not open it, and enjoy the contents of the package, it does not detract from the value of the gift that is given.

B. It is true that God wants all men to be saved.

1. When Paul was writing to Timothy, and spoke of the need to pray for those in authority, and he said:

2 Tim. 2:3-4 *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;*

4 *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

2. This is the desire of God.

2 Pet. 3:9 *God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

C. But in the infinite wisdom of God, God's creation was such that man would have a choice.

1. I have heard it illustrated this way: Picture God with arms extended holding out a very precious gift. This is not a gift which you deserve, but is offered freely to you.
2. Even though it is offered freely, and you in no way merit it, it is extended to you, made available to you, with conditions.

D. Consider these conditions.

1. You have to choose rather or not you want this gift. It is only made available to those who want it, and the merits of the gift are only made available to those who make the choice to accept it.
 - 1) If someone hands you a gift, you can make the choice to accept it or reject it.
 - 2) As hard as it is to fathom, there are those who know about the gift of God's grace and choose to reject it.
2. God makes it clear in His word that the merits of His grace will be made available to those who obey His will.

Matt. 7:21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Heb. 5:8-9 *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;*

5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*

3. Even though it is a gift which we do not merit, we cannot be saved unless we meet God's conditions.

E. Let's consider for a moment those conditions which we must meet in order to be saved from God's wrath, due to our sins.

1. Belief in God:

- 1) The question has been asked, "How can anyone possibly believe that Jesus is the sin offering, the means of saving grace, if he does not first believe in the God who loved him so much that He sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for sins?" (Ibid.)

2) **Heb. 11:6** *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

2. Belief in Christ

- 1) Jesus is the means or agent through which God's grace saves lost man.

John 14:1 ...ye believe in God, believe also in me.

John 8:24 ...for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.

- 2) We must believe in His deity; His divinity, His ability to save us from our sins.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

3. As we recognize the truth that we are lost in our sins, to receive the abundant grace of God, God requires that we be willing to repent of our sins.

- 1) Repentance involves a change of life, involving our heart, mind, mouth, and our actions, as the realization of our sins causes us to turn from our former manner of life to one of righteous living.

2 Cor. 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...

- 2) We have the example in **Acts 11:21**, when the message was being preached unto the Grecians:

And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

4. In God's conditions, and really a natural out-growth of our knowledge of the Christ, and the realization of sin, is the willingness to make a public confession of the Christ. God clearly states it as a significant step in receiving His saving grace.

Rom. 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

5. Baptism into Christ then becomes the critical element; the final step or condition which unlocks the merits of God's grace.

- 1) We have already established that one of the principal merits of God's grace is the blood of Christ.

- 2) If therefore one is serious about receiving the merits of His shed blood, they must have access to the blood.
- 3) Baptism is the key:

Rom. 6:3 *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

- 4) It was in the death of Christ that the Roman spear opened the side of Christ, and the fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened.

Zech. 13:1 *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

- F. The conditions set forth by God to receive His saving grace are by no means stringent or difficult.
1. What is difficult is to make the decision to turn from sin and live a righteous life.
 2. What is difficult is to become a Christian, a follower of Christ, for the world does ridicule and hate those who love righteousness.

CONCLUSION:

1. You must make a choice, Christ or the world. It cannot be both.

Matt. 6:24 *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

2. If you are not a Christian you must recognize that you are lost.
3. If you have not met God's conditions of faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, then you have not received the merits of God's grace.
5. As such, if you were to die in your current condition, you would be lost for all eternity.
6. God is extending His grace to you at this very moment. The choice is yours.