

Midweek Message

“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

(John 1:16 ESV)

This past Sunday we looked briefly at some of the truths regarding God’s grace toward us through the person and work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Theologians have often summarized this amazing grace of God by telling us that grace is God’s free and unmerited favor toward those who don’t deserve it and yet who need it the most. Others have said that grace is God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense which forms the acronym G.R.A.C.E. That acronym has been so helpful in reminding me that God has looked with favor upon me simply because He chose to do so. The only reason I believe in Jesus is simply because God Himself has made me alive in Christ. Now, I realize that one sermon on grace or even one midweek message on grace could never fully express all that ours because of God’s grace lavished us. However, I thought it might be good to follow up Sunday’s sermon with a few thoughts regarding what Scripture actually teaches us about God’s Amazing Grace.

First, we’re saved by God’s grace. As believers we should realize the truth of that statement as it’s exactly what Scripture teaches us. The Apostle Paul makes this point abundantly clear when he writes: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* His point is obvious in that only because of God’s grace extended to us through Jesus are we brought to salvation, being rescued from the judgment to come. Every human being, born of the natural means, is born into sin and are sinful from the moment of conception, having inherited the sinful nature from his or her parents. King David, makes this clear when he says in Psalm 51 verse 5, *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* The point is that we don’t become sinners once we sin. We sin because we’re already sinners and as such are under the just judgment of a holy and righteous God. In Ephesians 2 beginning in verse 1 we’re reminded of this when the Apostle Paul writes:

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
(Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV)

The evidence is quite clear, isn’t it? Sin has dominion over all who are born of natural means into the world. However, what the Apostle Paul says next is what’s so wonderful for us. You see, he tells us:

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7 ESV)

It’s all because of God’s love, mercy, and grace that He has made us alive and has brought us to faith in person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe simply because God reached down into our state of spiritual death and lifted us up to new life in Jesus, because He chose to do so.

Second, we’re sanctified by God’s grace. This follows from the point of salvation and moves us onward toward becoming more and more like Jesus. In his letter to Titus, chapter 2, beginning in verse 11 the Apostle Paul writes:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (ESV)

Even though we're the ones who say NO to sin it's only because God's grace is working in us so that we might continue to be transformed from those who rebel against God to those who now seek to love and obey Him in every aspect of our lives. In his letter to the Romans, chapter 6, beginning in verse 1 the Apostle Paul, after spending the previous chapter driving home the point of our justification in Jesus, he then answers an obvious question in this way:

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (ESV)

That certainly makes sense, doesn't it? If we've been saved from sin, justified before God because of our Lord's sacrifice to pay for our sins, then it stands to reason that we should no longer walk in sin either, right?

Third, we're strengthened by God's grace. Nothing we do as God's people should ever be that which is in our own strength. The truth is, when we go about living for God's glory we simply cannot do so in and of ourselves. The Apostle Paul in speaking of the hardships and weakness in his own life prayed for God to remove them. However, in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12 and verse 9 God told Him and us this: *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (ESV)* Life has its problems and often we may feel like giving up. However, God tells us that regardless of what we might happen to face we can go forward, we can continue on, because there's sufficient grace available for us. I've been greatly helped by the Apostle Paul's statement regarding his personal ministry as rendered in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, beginning in verse 10 where he says: *“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” (ESV)* You see, it's really all about God's grace working in and through us to accomplish what God desires in and through us. Nothing we do can come close to what God desires except through the power of the Holy Spirit who works this grace in us.

Finally, we serve by God's grace. The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, chapter 4 and verse 10 writes: *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace ...” (ESV)* The Apostle Paul adds this admonition in Romans, chapter 12, verse 6: *“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them ...” (ESV)* You see, we've all been gifted by the Holy Spirit so that we can serve the greater community, both in the church and even outside of the church. These spiritual gifts aren't so that we might feel good about ourselves but are for the building up of the body of Christ. And since it's God Himself who apportions these gifts as He pleases as well as empowering their use, there really isn't any room for boasting about our place in the community of faith.

Well, that's just a brief look at some of the wonderful blessings that come to us because of God's grace being lavished upon us. Obviously, it's not a complete essay on grace but I do hope it's an encouragement to all of you who know and love our Lord.

Pastor Mark