

“We Stand for This: Grace”  
Ephesians 2:1-10  
November 26, 2017  
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(8:05/9:30 <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/49035/grace> )

Verse 7 says that He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. “God has us right where he wants us...to shower us with grace.

Now ‘fess up---those boys jumping in the mud puddle looked fun didn’t it? huh, huh, huh.

Did you see the smiles on their faces? To be honest sometimes we have fun getting messy. Or even let me say...we have fun sinning...until we get caught or we feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I’ve looked at the clip a few times and you may have noticed that when the boys are caught by the father the little boy points his finger at the older boy. Isn’t that just like us! It’s not my fault; even though I participated...it’s the other person’s fault.

The boys are caught. You can see the look on the boy’s faces. What is going to happen now? What is our father going to do? And then they are washed off showered with the grace. “Grace like rain, hallelujah falls down on me”...all my stains are and mud are washed away. What a surprise to the boys when they are probably expecting the worst...and instead their Father joyfully washes away them off. And did you note at the very end of the clip what the Father did...hugged both boys.

Even though I watched this clip several times, I could watch it over and over again...Grace.

Be very clear We Stand for This: Grace. It’s Biblical and it at the very premise of who God is. Therefore we too stand for Grace. This is the last of our Sermon series on “We Stand for This.” Next week we begin our Advent Sermon series entitled: “Do You See What I See?”

Now today is a little of a different Sunday. Typically the Sunday after Thanksgiving is the first Sunday of Advent. And although Black Friday has taken place and Cyber Monday is tomorrow today we have a Sunday before we officially begin the Advent Season next Sunday. And yes you will see some decorations and some changes and certainly some surprises. I love Christmas!!! I am so excited about the Sermon Series and even the concept of you provided material for each of the messages---more about that next week.

When I think of this sermon on Grace and the transition next week with a sermon series leading up to Christmas, I couldn’t help but think of a Christmas movie. See this message is on Grace. Sometimes we use the term grace for a meal time prayer.

Do you remember the classic scene from the 1989 movie Christmas Vacation with Chevy Chase?

The Griswold family is gathered around the Christmas table and the dialogue goes something like this:

Clark : Since this is Aunt Bethany's 80th Christmas, I think she should lead us in the saying of Grace.

Aunt Bethany : [turns to Lewis] What, dear?

Nora Griswold : Grace!

Aunt Bethany : Grace? She passed away thirty years ago.

Uncle Lewis : They want you to say Grace.

[Bethany shakes her head in confusion]

Uncle Lewis : The BLESSING!

Aunt Bethany : [they all pose for prayer] I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Cousin Eddie stands and places his hand over his heart.

Clark : Amen

Well this grace is more than a meal time blessing. We stand for this Grace that is the core of who we are as believers.

Let's look at the full context of this great passage on Grace that Apostle Paul wrote in this letter to the church at Ephesus.

### **Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins**

Because of how the passage ends up notice the verb used here is “were” not “are”. You were dead...not you are dead. Were is past tense. You were dead. I'm not sure I have ever really met anyone who would say they have never sinned. Oh, we don't like to admit it, but I think we could agree we have not love God and loved one another as we should. Another way to say it is we have not showed grace to others like God has showed grace to us.

There is a hopelessness and a helplessness without Christ. Because of the sin we are spiritually dead. But thanks be to God He called your name and you ran out of that tomb. No longer dead to sin. We were dead in our trespasses---violating God's commands and also dead because of our sins—disobeying God by our thoughts, words, and deeds.

**<sup>2</sup>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—**

In which you once walked...that is why the past tense is used. However there may be some here today that are still are the walking dead...dead in trespasses and sin, following the course of this world, and following the prince of the power of the air.

The prince of the power of the air is none other than Satan. Satan loves to distract you from anything Godly. So Satan is at work causing people to be children of disobedience.

**— <sup>3</sup>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.**

Our passion our natural tendency is to sin. See a mud puddle you just want to kind of jump in it. We have a sinful nature. We take after Adam the first human. We have that bent toward sinning. That is how we are wired.

I was in early elementary school. I was walking with my dad home from work. His business, Baldrige Auto Repair, was only basically 4 houses from where we lived. We were about home when there was a huge mud puddle, so big the water and mud was covering half the side walk. “David be careful, don’t fall in the mud puddle.” Ha, I was going to fool them. I was going to **act** like I was going to jump in the mud puddle. Well I not only acted, uh, I slipped and well went into the mud puddle...well I caught myself and actually one leg went in the mud puddle one leg didn’t. So there I was one leg covered in mud, the other leg as clean as could be. Now was I clean or was I dirty. Did I need to be washed and cleaned up? There is no such thing as being half clean, or half dirty. You are or you ain’t.

Here is where Grace comes in.

**<sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—**

We have that we were dead in sin and trespasses, that we want to carry out the passions of our flesh and desires of our body and mind...notice the first word of verse 4...**BUT**...in contrast to those desires, in contrast to those sins, in spite of those tendencies---God being rich in mercy---because He loved us so much even when we were dead in our trespasses...made us alive with Christ...here it is...by Grace you have been saved. He is able, Christ is able to save. Oh, amazing Grace, how sweet the sound.

We are made alive. You see we were dead, but Jesus gives us life through His grace. Grace is that love that we do not deserve. But the Father is there to hose us off and hug us.

**<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

We are raised up with Jesus. We have new life spiritually. Oh, the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. He loves us.

Jerry Clower was an old Comedian known as “Mouth of Mississippi”, rural humor, character observation, and became a member of the Grand Old Opry.

Jerry Clower tells the following story about his good friends the Ledbetters. Mrs. Ledbetter had “umpteens” kids (we are talking 8 or 9 kids here.) One of the boys went missing, and she found him in a tar pit at a nearby construction site. She grabbed him by the hair, pulled him up out of the tar, and looked him over. She then shoved him back down into the tar as she said, “It would be easier to have another young’un that would be to clean you up!”

Ah, but Jesus takes the time to clean you up!!!!

If I were to summarize Methodist Theology in one word...which of course would be a big oversimplification it would be the word GRACE. We stand for this: Grace.

Grace can be defined as the love and mercy God give us because God wants us to have it not because of anything we have done to earn it.

In fact John Wesley, the founder of Methodism identified 3 difference aspects of Grace. 1<sup>st</sup> he said there was Prevenient Grace. This is grace that comes before us to prepare us for a life of love of God and neighbor. In infant Baptism we celebrate God’s act of prevenient grace on that child. God loves the child before the child even knows about God.

Reflect back in your life, maybe before you even knew Christ, and think of an instance when now that you look back you would say, “Wow, I don’t know how I got out of that mess.” John Wesley would say that was prevenient grace at work in your life.

Secondly Wesley said there was Justifying Grace/Saving Grace. Through the work of Christ our sins are forgiven and our relationship with God is restored.

**<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

God’s grace is a gift. God’s grace alone brings us into relationship with God. There are no hoops through which we have to jump in order to please God and to be loved by god. God has acted in Jesus Christ. We need only to respond in faith.

Grace is a gift of God...not works. It's not what you do, it is who you are. You are new and alive in Christ as by faith you accept His grace. You accept His love and forgiveness. Oh, like the video, you're caught, but you receive the gift of being washed off and he ends with giving you a hug.

We stand for this: Grace. Grace according to Wesley didn't stop there. Not only is there Prevenient Grace---grace that comes before, and Justifying Grace---saving grace through faith, but also Sanctifying Grace. Salvation is not a static onetime event in our lives. It is the ongoing experience of God's gracious presence transforming us into whom God intends us to be. It is through this grace that is constantly with us that we grow and mature and strive to live as Jesus lived. We pray, study the Bible, worship, share in fellowship with other believers and we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. Through that sanctifying grace we have compassion to human need and word for justice in our communities, we strengthen our capacity to love our neighbor. Our inner thought and motives as well our other actions and behavior are aligned with God's will.. With God's help, His sanctifying Grace that continual process of perfectly loving God and each other and removing our desire to sin. Grace upon grace.

As you have received Grace I hope and pray that you will show grace to others. Yes grace is that love even though we are muddy and unlovely. Even though we act out and disobey...there is grace. Do we show that grace to others? If you have received grace then should you not also give grace?

Rev. Jim Harnish was long time pastor of Hyde Park United Methodist Church in Tampa. He retired about 3 years ago now. I have known Jim for some time. I love this quote by him.

"Fear is not what drew most of us to become followers of Christ. Most of us were drawn to Christ on the basis of his love, his grace, his goodness, and his vision of the Kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven. My way of saying it is that we have a better chance at loving the hell out of people than scaring the hell out of them." (The Refiner's Fire May 21, 2014 / Jim Harnish)

That's Grace.