

Series: *Growing in Christ*  
Message Title: *Saving Grace*  
Date: Sunday, February 5, 2017  
Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10  
Speaker: David H. McKinley  
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

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## Introduction

Our annual theme and focal point this year is simply two words: Grow Up! We want to “grow up” in maturity, membership and mission.

Every realm in our culture has its own language—a common tongue of expression that sounds and feels foreign to those outside that realm. The term we often use for this language is *jargon*. For example in the...

Legal World = *Motion, Bench, Res Judicata, Civil, Bar*

Engineering World = *Capacity, Trip Generation, Grade Separation, Ramp*

Medical World = *Operating Room, Laparoscopic Appendectomy, Endotracheal Anesthesia, Infraumbilical Incision*

Educational World = *Social Narratives, etc.*

Theological World = *Hermeneutics, Eschatology, Supralapsarianism*

“Broadly speaking, the short words are the best and the old words are the best of all.”

—Sir Winston Churchill

One of the many words of common exchange in the Christian life is the word, *grace*.

>Grace is a common and connecting word found throughout Scripture. There are 128 references in the English Standard Version of the Bible to *grace*—the undeserved favor of God.

>Grace is a term attached to the most loved of all hymns of the faith: *Amazing Grace*.

>GRACE has a broad and yet a life-changing meaning. It is this meaning I want us to examine and embrace together today.

“Spiritual growth from start to finish is **all of grace**.” We are saved by grace, we are sustained by grace, and we are secured in grace.

G-R-O-W-I-N-G in Christ means we grow in *grace*.

A growing Christian understands and depends on God’s gracious work of redemption and

trusts His saving grace to sustain and secure through all the changing seasons of life.

This is why Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:18—conversion comes at the point of understanding and response to redeeming grace.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

“Saved” is not just a future hope, but a past tense. It is a work of God for us that results in the ongoing work of God in and through us.

Understanding the claims of grace is the starting point for Christian growth and development.

“You cannot grow in Christ if you lack confidence that you know Christ.”

Can you know? Yes! You must know. Christianity is not a “hope so” religion, but a “know so” religion. What if you asked me if I were married and I said, “I hope so.”

Read 1 John 5:11-13.

“Gospel-clarity and gospel confidence are vital for biblical discipleship.”

If you have doubts, that doesn't necessarily mean you are not saved. Doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. Something is not right and needs attention.

Today, I want us to examine more fully in our text the concept of grace. When you look at a diamond, it is often displayed on a dark backdrop. It is this contrast that gives/shows the brilliance of the diamond.



## 1. God's Narrative on Human Sinfulness

Grace is essential because of God's narrative on human sinfulness. Romans 3:23 says succinctly, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Ephesians 2 is the clearest and fullest statement in the New Testament on the human condition.

### **What's Wrong with Us?** (Divine diagnosis)

- **We're dead.** Something that is dead has no response to stimuli. Garden of Eden/Fall—"...day that you eat of it [fruit from the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17 ESV).

- **We're deceived**—following the prince of the power of the air. Satan said, no. "You will not surely die... you will be like God" (Genesis 3:4-5 ESV). New identity—like God! As a result, we have a false identity. We are like zombies—dead men walking, something animated in a human corpse!

- **We're disobedient.** The fruit of death is corruption in life. We are driven by desire and lust—every impulse that is of rebellion against God.

- **We're doomed.** "...were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3 ESV).

Read John 3:17-18. *Lost* is not a circumstance, but a state of being.

"Whatever else may be endowed, man is not as God intended for him to be."

—G.K. Chesterton

Man is sad, dysfunctional, sick, deprived, inhibited. Yet, "A superficial view of human condition results in superficial efforts to fix humanity." —Alistar Begg

As a result...

If we are misguided—increase education.

If we are sick—increase medication.

If mankind is rebellious—increase legislation, indoctrination, domination.

But the Bible offers a confrontational, counter-cultural concept. Our problem is not *sickness*, but *sinfulness*. We can't fix it because we are dead, deceived, disobedient, doomed!

This is where God steps in and grace reigns! "But God..."(Ephesians 2:4). We were dead, but Jesus stepped in and through Him, God made us alive. It is all of grace!

## **2. God's Operative Work of Grace**

Notice the repeating word of grace in Ephesians 2:5, 7, 8. It is the repeating "melody" in this section of Scripture.

Grace is the direct action of God's intervention into our condition of need and something He and He alone does for us that is neither dependent upon our behavior or effort.

Salvation, from start to finish, is a work of grace. Grace is God's initiative, God's operative, and God's complete work for us!

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). By grace—you are saved through faith. It is not your work, effort, cooperation, or completion; it is God's sovereign movement of mercy and grace.

Have you recognized this? Have you responded to this amazing grace?

When the Holy Spirit reveals our sin and need for salvation, He causes us to see that it is Christ who saves through His death, burial and resurrection. We respond, not with resolve to change, but through faith and trust in the One who died and rose to redeem, reclaim and renew us. We are saved. The realm of God's gracious work for us is Christ. God saves sinners for Jesus' sake!

Salvation is a gift—a gift of grace, not a reward! Even in faith—you don't muster it; it is simply applied as grace prevails in you.

"Grace is not a reward for faith; faith is the result of grace." —John Blanchard

You exercise faith in the simple, everyday things of life—things you eat, power you use [car, electricity, etc.], commitments you make. Lifewise, faith is God’s gift of grace to allow you to trust Him and experience His saving work in you. Faith is not sincerity, but reliability.

“It is not faith that saves, but faith in Jesus Christ. It is not, strictly speaking, even faith in Christ that saves, but Christ that saves through faith. The saving power resides exclusively, not in the act of faith or the attitude of faith or in the nature of faith, but in the object of faith.” —B. B. Warfield

All of this is centered in and focused upon Jesus Christ—alive together with Christ, new identity. He is the One who accomplishes and applies the gracious redeeming work of the Father for us by His Holy Spirit.

In mercy, God does not give us what we deserve (justice), but by grace, God gives us what we do not deserve—forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life.

This is why we say God’s G-R-A-C-E is amazing!

**God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**



But the saving work of grace is not complete if we fail to continue to verse 10...

### **3. God's Progressive Plan For Glory**

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10 ESV).

"*poiema*" = God is constructing and expressing a "poem" through our lives for His glory.

There are two aspects of this—(1) future and (2) present:

Future: "... so that in the coming ages..." (Ephesians 2:7). We will reflect the glory of God as "trophies of His grace". The Super Bowl always results in a championship with someone taking home the Vince Lombardi Trophy—22 inches tall, weighs 7 lbs and sterling silver. The Tiffany piece money can't buy! We are not the ones who earn the trophy; we become the trophy of God's grace in Christ.

Present: "...for good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

Sound doctrine and good theology are found in three prepositions: by grace...through faith... for good works.

Grace gives glory to God for His goodness and kindness in the face of human sinfulness.

You can know you are saved by the work of Christ and show it by the work of Christ through you. Christian growth is fully a work of grace in us, for us and through us.

In the current lunar cycle, we are approaching a full moon. My wife, Connie, and I have transom windows in our bedroom and sometimes I am awakened by the brilliance of the moon shining through the window. But the brilliance of moonlight is not originated on its own; the moon it is a reflection of the sun.

Likewise, we live to reflect the light of God's glorious, radiant Son because of His amazing grace.