

REVIEW

1. We started looking at grace last week - Review

- A. We saw that it's God's goodness to those who don't deserve it in every area of our life
Peter Jeffery: "Grace is the unmerited gift of God to a people who do not deserve it, but who deserve just the opposite. It is God showing goodness to a people who deserve judgment."
- B. We saw how it links to salvation and our relationship with God
How all those blessings in Ephesians 1 we looked at our because of the riches of God's grace
- 1). We're saved by Grace – chosen by grace – adopted by grace and redeemed by grace
 - 2). We saw that we know God's will by grace
 - 3). We have obtained an inheritance by grace – all that Jesus has been given
 - 4). We saw that we are secure because of grace – Holy Spirit given is a guarantee

2. So every aspect of our salvation – and blessings is grace saturated – not works

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For *by grace you have been saved* through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

- A. I can't earn His favor through my works – I can only receive His favor because of His work
- 1). But I believed – I received Him – true but...
A. W. Tozer: God is always previous, God is always there first, and if you have any desire for God, and for the things of God, it is God himself who put it there.

Transition: Tonight I want to show you how everything is motivated by grace

- A. We know we are saved by grace – God chose us – drew us – we didn't deserve that
We know we are blessed by grace – we don't deserve God's kindness and mercy
- 1). Scripture says we are recipients of grace upon grace
- B. But just to show you how grace saturated our lives are
- 1). I want to look at something like repentance and confession and believers
I want to show you that those are also the fruit of grace in our lives

I. REPENTANCE AND GRACE

1. Getting the right perspective

- A. We talk about the necessity to repent from sin to experience Him – that is true
- 1). But I have heard it taught in such a way that it makes God seem like He is so angry with us
That He is so disgusted with our failures – that we'd better repent before He harm us
 - a). That He's going to lash out against us
- B. Let's talk about that – so many do what they do because they fear God will hurt them
- 1). They obey out of legalism – as a slave – obeying only out of fear
 - a). Seminary student – well known for his faithfulness in morning devotions – never missed
“Why do you do that?” – “Because I'm afraid God will hurt me if I don't”
 - b). That's the obedience of a slave – no joy in it – that's the result of legalism
 - 2). That's not what the understanding of grace will do in our lives – frees us from that
 - a). Frees us from living life feeling like were always upsetting God – always disappointed
 - b). He sees us in the perfection of Christ – He is not disappointed – He's not always upset
 - 3). He has already poured out all His anger on Christ for every one of your sins!
 - a). Christ is our propitiation – what does that mean?
 - 1a). He exhausted the anger of God against our sin until there was NOTHING left

- b). God is not mad at you – He loves you – there is no anger left it was exhausted on Christ
- 4). I found a story that illustrates this well
- We're a little like the duck hunter who was hunting with his friend in a wide-open barren of land in southeastern Georgia. Far away on the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke. Soon, he could hear the sound of crackling. A wind came up and he realized the terrible truth: a brush fire was advancing his way. It was moving so fast that he and his friend could not outrun it. The hunter began to rifle through his pockets. Then he emptied all the contents of his knapsack. He soon found what he was looking for— a book of matches. To his friend's amazement, he pulled out a match and struck it. He lit a small fire around the two of them. Soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the brush fire to come. They did not have to wait long. They covered their mouths with their handkerchiefs and braced themselves. The fire came near —and swept over them. But they were completely unhurt. They weren't even touched. *Fire would not burn the place where fire had already burned*
- a). The law that demanded God's holy anger against your sin
- 1a). But that anger has already raged – it burnt itself out on Christ if you're in Him
- 2a). There is no anger left at all towards you
- b). Our Father may have to treat us roughly at times – to discipline us
- 1a). But it's always out of love – always for our good
- c). Now listen – Children of God – His every thought towards you now is one of love
- Transition:** Back to repentance and confession – we need to repent to experience Him - true
- A. But it's not because He's angry – then why do we need to be concerned about it
- 1). Because John says when we sin – we walk away from God – we break fellowship
- 2). And the only way to change that is through confession and repentance
- B. But I want to show you how grace works in even this

I. GRACE AND REPENTANCE

Turn: 1 John and see this – I want you to see grace here also

1 Jn 1:5–7 (ESV) This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁽⁶⁾ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁽⁷⁾ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1. When we choose to walk in sin – we walk where He isn't – He walks in the light

- A. If we think we can sin and still enjoy the presence of God – John says it won't happen
- 1). Not because God is angry with you – but you have chosen to walk out of the realm He walks in
- a). Your sin has created a gap – it has moved you away
- B. The only way to close that gap is through confession and repentance

1 Jn 1:9 (ESV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- 1). I admit it is sin and I turn from it to turn to God

Question: Where would this desire to deal with sin come from? Who is drawing us back?

Php 2:12–13 (NIV) Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ⁽¹³⁾ *for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

- A. Grace! God comes to us and works in a desire to want more of Him
- 1). And He works in us a willingness to turn from that sin that is hindering that
- And then gives us the power to turn from it in repentance – *to will and to do*
- B. Look at 1 John 2:1 – so important to see what's happening here
- Why would he put this right after confession – chapter break is wrong here

1 Jn 1:9–10 (ESV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ⁽¹⁰⁾ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 Jn 2:1–2 (ESV) My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ⁽²⁾ He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Better: 1 Jn 2:1–2 (NIV) My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. *But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense*—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ⁽²⁾ He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins...

- 1). I am writing so you won't sin – but when you do – and you will - you need to confess it
- 2). And when you confess it – you aren't going to someone who is angry with you
- 3). You go to the one who is on your side – to an advocate who loves you – is drawing you
 - a). You go to grace – stunning grace

Question: Why would God say that? To enable confession

- A. We don't confess to somebody who will use our weakness against us –
 - 1). Do you know people who do that? You don't confess anything to them
 - a). You're just handing them a weapon to beat you with
 - 2). But we will confess to somebody we can trust – one who is for us – who will help us
 - a). We find that to be very healthy don't we

2. The example of the return of the Prodigal son (see from a different angle)

- A. He treated his father so shamelessly
 - 1). Asking for his inheritance early – getting it – family land – selling it
 - 2). Going off to a far off country - partied it up until everything was gone
 - a). Finally – eating pigs food – starving - he comes to his senses
“Why am I eating pigs food when my father's hired hands have plenty of bread?”
- B. He says I will return to my Father and I will say
“I no longer deserve to be called your son but let me be like one of your hired servants”
 - 1). I know what I've done – I know I don't deserve anything from you but anger and resentment
But can you find it in your heart to at least treat me like one of your hired hands
 - 2). Do you hear the depression there – “I've blown it so badly I'll never be more than a second class citizen in my father's house” =
 - a). Have you ever felt that way about the kingdom of God? I have!
- C. He returns – practicing the speech on the way
 - 1). As soon as he gets into view – his father sees him and starts running to him
 - a). Why? To beat him – to give him what he deserves
 - b). *NO to give him what he doesn't deserve – to give him grace*
- D. Let's pick up the story here in Luke 15 – just listen
Lk 15:20–24 (ESV) And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ⁽²¹⁾ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ⁽²²⁾ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ⁽²³⁾ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ⁽²⁴⁾ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.
 - 1). Wow! No grudges – no reluctance
No probation period: “I'll let you back but one slip up and you're gone! I'm watching you”
 - 2). He's not interested in any of this “I'm no longer worthy to be called your son” nonsense
 - a). Why? He's too busy blessing him
 - 3). Quick bring the best robe! To replace those tattered clothes sin has stained

- a). He would be covered in a long, stately robe – the kind kings wore

Same has happened to us. The stains of our sin are covered: Isa 61:10 (NIV) I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. *For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness...*

- 1a). I am clothed in the purity of Christ's perfection

- 4). Put a ring on his finger - this would be symbolic of sonship

- a). If you don't feel like my son – just look at your finger – I say you are

- 5). Get him sandals – only the father's slaves were barefoot – not his sons!

Point: Bill - But you don't know what I've done – I don't care

You have not out sinned this boy – not even close

A. Yeah but I feel so dirty - Can you imagine what this boy felt like and smelled like?

- 1). He was caked in pig excrement – he was filthy – he stank

But what did this father do? He fell upon him and kissed him all over – just loved him

B. Why is this in the Bible? Because God is telling us that is what He's like

- 1). God is telling you that you haven't out sinned His love

He is telling you that His grace is greater than anything you have done

You who have blown it – see His grace in this story

A. He may be drawing you back tonight – He's telling you it's safe to return – you return to love

B. Can I say this – you would never desire to return if it wasn't for grace

- 1). If you're feeling that tug – grace is active in your life right now

- 2). He is stooping down – to lift you back up

John Bunyan: Men may fall by sin, but cannot raise themselves up without the help of grace.

Transition: Let's look at another gracious incentive to return

3. The example of grace drawing the children of Israel to repentance

Turn: Joel 2:25 (ESV) I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.

A. Background: Because of sin - God had disciplined His people for four long years

- 1). They had suffered complete destruction of their entire harvest through swarms of locusts

- a). Year after year desolation!

- 2). You may have felt that – you've felt God's disciplining hand and it's been rough

- a). It has come from love – to turn you from sin – but it hasn't been easy

B. But God is moving – the discipline is over – graciously He begins to call them back

Joe 2:12–13 (ESV) “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, *“return to me with all your heart,* with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ⁽¹³⁾ and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

- 1). Then the gracious promise

- a). Like 1 John 2:1-2 Come back – I'm not against you – I'm for you

- b). Like we saw in the Prodigal Son – He's not angry – He longs for you to return

Joel 2:18–19 (ESV) Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. ⁽¹⁹⁾ The LORD answered and said to his people, “Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, *and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.*

Joel 2:24 (ESV) “The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

Joel 2:26 (ESV) *“You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,* and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

- 1). He had disciplined them – but in grace is restoring them

- 2). Has He disciplined you – not out of anger but out of love
 - a). To drive you away from sin and back to Him
 - b). Now is He whispering to you – “Aren’t you tired of this – come back”
- 3). What is the promise? It is incredible
Joe 2:25 (ESV) *I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten*, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.
 - a). I can restore your life – all those years you think sin has stolen!
 All that time you fought me – I can restore that!!!

Question: What do lost years look like?

- A. They may be fruitless years.
 - 1). These Israelites had put a lot of work into those crops – for nothing – wasted effort
 - 2). Maybe you’ve made bad investments – put all your effort into a dream that failed
 - a). You think – all that work – all that time – all that effort just wasted!
- B. They may be Christ-less years
 - 1). You may have come to the Lord late in life – you look at all those years before with regret
 “What in the world have I been doing? Why did I receive Christ so late! What a waste”
 - a). Half my life – gone – wasted – I pursued what could not last!
 - 2). God says I can use even that – I can make those valuable
 - a). I’ll use them so you can relate to others – all that pain – I’ll redeem it – use it
- C. They may be rebellious years
 - 1). You served God for a while – you walked with Him – you were filled with joy
 - 2). But your heart for some reason became attracted to the world – it’s pleasures
 - a). You gave in – you rebelled – and you spent years in the pig-pen of this world
 - b). You can relate to the song by Robert Robinson all to well
 Oh, to grace how great a debtor Daily I’m constrained to be! Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter, ***Bind my wandering heart to thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;*** Take my heart, Oh, take and seal it, Seal it from thy courts above!
 1a).
 - 3). You’ve had a wandering heart – now you look back on those years with so much regret
 - a). All those years the locusts have eaten
 - D. They may be years of alienation from loved ones
 - 1). Families can be divided – loved ones stop speaking – Children and parents are separated
 - 2). You feel heartbroken – the locusts have devoured these years we could have had together
 - E. Misdirected years
 - 1). You chose a career or even earned a college degree that turned out to be a dead end
 - 2). You made some bad investments – didn’t avail yourselves of some opportunities
 - a). Bad decisions – you moved when you shouldn’t – stay when you should have moved
 - 3). You think “What now!” – I’ve blown it – so many wrong choices
 - a). I’m stuck here and there is nothing I can do now!

Point: There is hope for you – grace is able and willing to restore those years

Joe 2:25 (ESV) I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.

A. He can restore those years by deepening your communion with Christ

Joe 2:27 (ESV) You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God...

- 1). You’ve lost so much – you feel so empty

- God whispers – I’m going to become you’re treasure
- a). You’ll find a satisfaction and contentment in me that is greater than anything you’ve lost
 - b). I’m going to become all you need
- 2). Just return to me – let me bless you
 - a). He may be calling you by grace – He wants to restore your life
 - 3). Like the Father with the prodigal son – He is not holding a grudge
Do you feel the tug – respond and see what He will do
- B. God can restore the lost years by multiplying your fruitfulness
- 1). Think of this – these people had their crops wiped out for four years
 - a). But God restored those years by giving them bumper harvests.
 - 2). Does that sound good? Does that sound like grace?
 - a). Return to Him – Give yourself fully to Him – watch what He does
 - b). I’ve wasted so much time – perhaps – BUT give yourself to Him
- C. You may be getting a bit older and think my fruitful years are behind me
- 1). If only I would have gone to seminary – or did this or that – I could really be used
 - a). No! Give yourselves to Him – answer that drawing by grace
 - 1a). He can use you now more than ever! These may be your most fruitful years
 - 2). Carri and I have talked about this – Why can’t THESE be our most fruitful years
 - a). Why can’t these be the greatest years of our life serving God!
 - b). I wrote a blog – look it up on our website – “Running the race with gray hair”

4. Again we have breath taking grace

God saying to the rebel – “I am calling you back – to bless you”

- A. I am not holding a grudge – I am calling you back to restore all those years your rebellion has eaten
- 1). That is what grace looks like
I am not going to give you what you deserve! I am going to give you what you don’t deserve!
- B. All this is meant to cause us to feel safe to return – safe to draw near
- 1). Do you feel that tug tonight – I want to get closer to a God like that
That is His grace – He is encouraging you – you haven’t out-sinned my love
- C. He wants to bless you – but let me say the greatest blessing is this – It is Him!
- 1). He is drawing you back to Him

CONCLUSION

1. We add another layer onto grace

- A. We are saved by grace
- B. When we get off track we are drawn back by that same grace
- 1). When we get to glory we will look back at our life and say
“I’m here because of grace.”