

The Union Press

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:4, NASB

His banner over me is
LOVE

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The Due Date for the
March Newsletter is
February 22nd.

THOUGHTS ON GRACE

My Mommom Peterson made my favorite meal of all time: chicken and dumplings, with banana pudding for dessert. It was irresistible. I remember her making it for birthdays and special occasions, but sometimes she made it just because—and those were the best of all. I would never turn it down. I couldn't turn it down. It was impossible for me to resist.

This is how the Reformers spoke of God's grace: it was irresistible. God so fully changes our hearts that He gives us both the desire to believe and saving faith itself. Like my Mommom's chicken and dumplings and banana pudding, those upon whom God has fixed His love cannot and will not say no to His amazing grace.

A STORY OF GRACE

To understand this grace more clearly, we must turn to Scripture. There are many passages we could examine, but perhaps one of the clearest examples comes from the life of the apostle Paul. Paul describes himself as, “*circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless...*” (Philippians 3:5–6)

From Paul's perspective, he was a faithful man of God. Yet Paul received a sobering reality check when he encountered the living Christ on the road to Damascus. As a Pharisee, Paul believed Jesus was rightly crucified for blaspheming God. Acting on

that belief, he hunted down Christians so that they might be punished for their heretical claims.

But something extraordinary happens as Paul makes his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. Scripture tells us that while he was “still breathing threats and murder,” a light from heaven shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:1–5).

This encounter changed Paul's life forever. He was not searching for Christ; instead, Christ pursued him, pouring out grace to a murderer and sending Paul to proclaim the good news of God's mercy from city to city, to all who would hear. Of this grace, Paul 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.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

“*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” (Romans 3:23–24)

“*He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy... having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*” (Titus 3:5–7)

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Taken together, these passages show us that grace is God's free and unmerited favor toward sinners who deserve judgment. Grace exposes our sin while revealing God's love and mercy.

GRACE HOLDS UP A MIRROR

When I was a kid, I assumed all older ladies owned an illuminated makeup mirror. Perhaps it was a womanly rite of passage—every lady I knew seemed to have one. What I never understood was this: for something meant to make people look beautiful, I always thought it made me look ugly. My pores looked like craters, I could see every nose hair, and my face appeared bulgy and distorted.

In much the same way, God's grace does not flatter us. Like a makeup mirror, it shines a spotlight on our hearts and shows us our sin for what it truly is. It's hard to read the early chapters of Genesis without coming away with the understanding that our sin separates us from God and that our fallen nature is passed down from generation to generation. By nature, our hearts are turned away from God. We don't want Him, don't want to listen to Him, and are content to live life without Him.

At this point, someone may object: *"You talk as if everyone is utterly terrible and incapable of doing anything good at all. I know many people—non-Christians included—who love others and try to do what's right. Doesn't that mean there is still good in people?"*

That observation isn't wrong—but it doesn't contradict what Scripture teaches. Instead, it points us again to God's grace. God restrains sin; He does not allow evil to run its full course in the world. In the story of Noah and the flood, we see what happens when sin is given free rein: *every intention of the human heart was continually evil*.

We don't have to look far to see that the world is broken. At the same time, we must understand that the nature of sin is such that the world would tear itself apart—without any trace of goodness—were it not for God's restraining grace. It is true that this restraining grace allows for kindness, discipline, and outward morality, but we must not confuse these things with a saving knowledge of God. God's restraining grace is not saving grace.

This objection also calls us to take an honest look at our own good works. Even when we do what appears right, our motives are often mixed. Are our actions done to please God or to please others? Are they free from self-righteousness or the desire for praise? Are they done without resentment or compulsion? Rarely are our actions as pure as we would like to believe.

God has given us His law to show us what is truly good and to bring order to this chaotic world. And while the law is holy and just, it also exposes our inability to keep it by revealing how sinful we are. We need more than willpower—we need the supernatural grace and power of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul understood this. Reflecting on his life, he wrote:

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent... The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Timothy 1:12–15)

Later, when Paul struggled with his own weakness, the Lord reminded him, *"My grace is sufficient for you."* (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Paul's story forces us to ask an uncomfortable but necessary question: are we any different?

Are we not, in our own way, the foremost of sinners—entirely dependent upon God's grace?

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THE HARD WORK OF HEART WORK

This brings us to a solemn truth: while many may hear the gospel, not all believe. The difference is not in the message but in the work of God. For some, God works faith into their hearts. Their ears are opened, and they do not merely hear, but truly listen and understand both their sinful condition and that Christ is their remedy. Like Paul, the scales fall from their eyes. Their hearts—once hard and brittle like clay baked in the sun—are softened and shaped by the Potter's hands.

Through this effectual work of the Holy Spirit, God penetrates the deepest parts of a person, making alive what was dead and willing what was once unwilling. God's grace does not merely make salvation possible; He makes it so. He makes us new creations.

The Lord declares what He will do for His people:

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:33-34)

Others, however, respond differently. They are like the various soils Jesus describes in Matthew 13 in the parable of the Sower. Some hear the word, yet it never takes root. Others hear it and respond with immediate enthusiasm, but their roots are shallow and never reach the heart. Perhaps they feel some reverence for God's word. Perhaps they may have, in their own power, tried to flee from sin and temptation, or sought to do good works, but after some time found no strength or fruit to continue, they revert to old patterns and habits.

Still others hear the promises of the gospel and, seeing their lives an utter mess, recognize them as good news. Yet over time, they come to believe that Jesus cannot truly help them—that the world offers better solutions than Christ.

This lack of faith is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ who stands at the center of the gospel, nor of God who calls sinners to Himself through the proclamation of the gospel. The fault lies with those who: *"Hear, but do not understand; see, but do not perceive... whose hearts are dull, whose ears are heavy, and whose eyes are blind."* (Isaiah 6:9-10)

GRACE THAT CALLS AND KEEPS

Those who do not believe deserve our compassion. We must remember where we would be if not for God's irresistible grace—we would be lost and without hope in this world. "Such were some of you," Paul reminds us.

They also deserve our prayers. If God would rescue someone like us, there is hope for anyone, no matter how far they may seem from Him. I hope we see that faith itself is a gift—given, sustained, and preserved by God. And when we grasp this truth, it leaves no room for pride. There is only gratitude, only boasting in what the Lord has done for us through His Son.

Let us seek to grow in grace by making full use of the means God has given for the strengthening of His people: His Holy Word, the sacraments, prayer, and discipline. All of which point us to and ground us in Christ. **May we use these means to hold fast to the One who has laid hold of us.**

FINANCIAL REPORT

Giving for December: \$15,825

Year to Date Giving: \$166,316

December Expenses: \$32,576

Year to Date Expenses: \$187,838

Avg. Attendance: 60

Sunday School collection for the Givers: \$135



February

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship Congregational Meeting 4:00 Prayer Service @Middle Octorara PC	2 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group <small>Groundhog Day</small>	3 9:00 am Quilting 7:00 Trustee Mtg	4 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	5 5:30 Quarryville Growth Group	6 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups	7
8 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	9 1:00 Bible Study 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	10 9:00 am Quilting 7:00 Safety Mtg	11 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	12	13 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups	14 <small>Valentine's Day</small>
15 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship <small>Transfiguration Sunday</small>	16 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group <small>Presidents Day</small>	17 9:00 am Quilting	18 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group 7:00 Session Mtg <small>Ash Wednesday</small>	19 5:30 Quarryville Growth Group	20 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups 6:00-8:00 pm Family Night	21
22 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	23 6:30 Octorara Pines Growth Group	24 9:00 am Quilting	25 10:00 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Union Growth Group	26	27 1:30 Kirkwood Growth Groups	28

FOOD BANK

Tomato soup, chicken noodle soup, pineapple slices/rings (can), snack crackers (individually wrapped packs), gluten-free foods, tuna (canned), pork and beans, microwave popcorn, fruit cups, granola bars

Easter 2026: Please bring your donated items for our Easter bag give-away by Monday, Mar. 23. Non-perishable items can be put in the grocery cart at Union before Sunday, Mar. 22nd.

Whole Ham or Ham slices or gift card to Giant grocery, 2 -cans of green beans, 1 - 20 oz. can of pineapple (slices or rings), 1 -1lb. bag of long carrots, 1 -5 lb. bag of fresh potatoes, 1 -box yellow or white cake mix, 1 -container of vanilla frosting, 1 -dozen eggs, 1 -1 lb box of butter or margarine, 1 - bag of jelly beans, 1 -bag of shredded coconut

FEBRUARY GREETERS

1 – (OPEN)
8 – (OPEN)
15 – (OPEN)
22 – (OPEN)

LECTIONARY PASSAGES

February 1st

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15;
1 Corinthians 1:18-31;
Matthew 5:1-12

February 8th

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 112:1-9;
1 Corinthians 2:1-12;
Matthew 5:13-20

February 15th

Transfiguration of the Lord

Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2;
2 Peter 1:16-21;
Matthew 17:1-9

February 22nd

1st Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7;
Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19;
Matthew 4:1-11



Thank you very much for your generous Christmas gift! The congregation's support means so much, especially while away from home. I'm currently in command of a Military Police Company at Fort Hood, Texas before I move to Camp Atterbury, Indiana this summer. Thank you again for your continued prayers and support, I hope everyone has a happy and healthy 2026!
~ Bailey McCardell Hoefling



FEB. BIRTHDAYS

3	Blanche Church
	Lori Kelley
4	Ruth Barker
5	Bradley Fuller
	Faye Chase Whyte
7	Nathan Supplee
10	Dorothy Walton
14	Jerry Whiteside
18	Richard Stewart
23	Dorothy Herr
26	Thomas Hastings



Thank you for thinking of me this holiday season. As always, I appreciate the support and look forward to my next visit to Union. I wish everyone a blessed and happy new year.

Go Army! Love, Trey
McCardell

Thank you so much for the generous gift and your continuous prayers. We greatly appreciate your love and support. Go Army! Love, Casey & Joe Cotton

**Union Presbyterian Church
5637 Street Road,
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UNION PRESS

FEBRUARY 2026



Dear UPC Family,

We are excited to announce that Kevin Oswald will be taking over custodial and minor maintenance duties for the church beginning in February. Kevin is looking forward to this new role and brings valuable experience from his work at QPRC, as well as his service as a trustee.

As we welcome Kevin into this position, we would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Rose Brendel for her many years of dedicated service to the church. We truly appreciate her hard work and commitment over the years.

Please take a moment to welcome Kevin into his new role.

Sincerely,
UPC Session

