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Ephesians 1:2  
Grace pt. 2

We started a series last week on the book of Ephesians. Paul first identifies himself as the author, and then addresses the letter to the Ephesians, and then says "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ".

Last week we got as far as the first word – grace. I don't think we'll get any further today. I took out my calculator and did a few simple calculations. If it takes us two weeks per word in the book of Ephesians, we should be wrapping up this series in April of the year 2094. No, but Ephesians is more or less going to be a track that we are going to run on for quite some time. At times we will linger for quite some time on a specific verse or reality. At other times we might pass through rather quickly. We'll see.

But it is impossible to pass quickly by the word grace. Grace, as we began to see last week, is one of those spiritual realities that must be defined and understood in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we began to look at last week, grace is a relationship with God that you have come to through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and your being joined to Him. Here's another way to say it, grace is a relationship with God where you are granted Christ's death and burial for justification, and Christ's resurrection as your very life.

Here's yet another way to say it: grace is God letting you into Christ's relationship with His Father, but you only come into that relationship with God through His death, burial, and resurrection.

What's the big deal about the death, burial, and resurrection? Why do you keep bringing that up? The big deal is that grace does not apply to Adam. Grace applies to those who are in Christ by being first baptized into His death. Those who have died with Him, been buried with Him, and been raised in Him.

Whether you have spiritual understanding yet as to what that means or how significant it is, you cannot deny this is in the Scripture. You cannot deny that when Paul tried to describe the grace of God, he always described a death that we could never die, and Christ's risen life that works in us - by which we do all things.

\* Review Bus Analogy

I cannot make that real to your heart, only the Spirit can do that. But I can show you that it was made real to the Apostle's heart by the Spirit, and that it was a relationship with God wherein Christ is made all things unto us. The first thing Christ is made unto us is death. Judgment. An end. And after that, Christ can become our

beginning. After He is our ending, He can make all things new in Himself. But He is the end before He is the beginning. He is the last before He is the first.

**Joh 1:17** For the Law came through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You see, there are two ways to relate to God. There is one called Law, and there is one called grace. In either one we are a vessel that acts as a slave. We may have deceived ourselves into thinking otherwise, but it is true.

**Joh 8:31** Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed on Him, If you continue in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. **32** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. **33** They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to anyone. How do you say, You will be made free? **34** Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever practices sin is the slave of sin.

Paul says the same thing in Romans chapter 6. Under law, you experience God's relationship with Adam. In that relationship you are a vessel that is enslaved to a nature working in it. That nature is called sin. Sin is not a description of certain kinds of behavior. Sin is a nature that works in the old man. Sin is a nature, a kind.

Under grace, you have come into Christ's relationship with His Father. In this relationship you are also a vessel that must become the "slave" of a nature that is working in it. In grace, the nature working in you is called Righteousness. Righteousness is not a description of a certain kind of behavior. Righteousness is a nature, the nature of Christ that works in His body.

It helped me a great deal the time when the Lord began showing me that sin isn't something I do, sin is something I am apart from Christ. Sin is missing the mark, falling short of the glory of God. Sin has less to do with the thing being done as it does with who's doing it. Sin is the nature that works in the natural man. You're not a sinner because you sin. You sin because you're a sinner.

On the other side of that same coin, righteousness isn't something I can do, but rather something that He is. And something that can work in me...but it can only work in me by grace and through faith. Righteousness shouldn't be a word that we use to describe certain kinds of behavior. Righteousness is a word that has to do with a person, a nature, a seed, a kind that works in me us according to grace and by faith.

Apart from Him, my goodness is unrighteousness. My "righteousness" is filthy rags. Apart from Him working in me by grace, I can do nothing. Have we realized that righteousness is only the nature of Christ working in you by His Spirit, and that that is only by faith? Galatians 5:5 says that very thing – that we, through the Spirit, are in expectation of the righteousness that works in us by faith.

Let me say it very plainly. Sin and righteousness are not things that you chose to do or not to do. It is true that we commit sins, but that is because we are slaves to sin. "Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin". It is true that we, in Christ, come to bear the fruit of righteousness. But that is because, as Romans says, we are alive from the dead in Christ and have become "slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:16, 18, 19).

That doesn't mean that we are instantaneously a full manifestation of righteousness. No, we must be sanctified, that is set apart in the truth, in the Word, walking in the light, as the Lord takes out of our heart what He has already taken out of His sight. But it does mean that everything that does not come from righteousness is sin.

Rom 14:23 ... all that *is* not of faith is sin.

What does that have to do with grace? Well... I'm getting slightly off my topic. But I was just trying to make the point of Romans 5:1-2 – that it is through faith that we access the grace in which we stand. We already stand in this relationship with God called grace. We've been "under grace", we've stood in grace since the day we were born of His Spirit.

Whether we realized it or not, it was the fullness of His Spirit granted to us through His death, His burial, and His resurrection.

Grace is a relationship with God where, because we have died with Christ, we become a vessel of His risen life. We walk in the newness of His resurrected life. We are slaves of righteousness. We are free from sin. I know this sounds extreme, but I'm simply quoting verses from Romans chapter 6.

Rom 6:1-23 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? (2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (3) Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?

Here is the beginning of grace. As many of us as were baptized into Christ were first and foremost baptized into His death.

(4) Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from *the* dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Incidentally, do you realize that this phrase "newness of life" isn't just a newer life. It is "new" because it is the first time you have ever known life. It is the newness of life because prior to this resurrected life, you have been dead in transgressions and sins.

(5) For if we have been planted together in the form of His death, we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection;

("in the likeness" is not in the original. It is in italics because it has been added. The Greek simply reads "we shall be of His resurrection")

(6) knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin. (7) For he who died has been freed from sin. (8) But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (9) knowing that when Christ was raised from *the* dead, He dies no more; death no longer has dominion over Him. (10) For in that He died, He died to sin once; but in that He lives, He lives to God. (11) Likewise count yourselves (that is "know yourself, come to understand yourself") also to be truly dead to sin, but alive to God

through Jesus Christ our Lord. (12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. (13) Do not yield your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God, as *one* alive from *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law, but under grace. (15) What then? Shall we sin because **we are not under Law, but under grace?** Let it not be! (16) Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves to him whom you obey; whether it is of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness. (17) But thanks *be* to our God that you were the slaves of sin, but you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (18) Then being made free from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness. (19) I speak in the manner of men because of the weakness of your flesh; for as you have yielded your members *as* slaves to uncleanness, and to lawless act unto lawless act, even so now yield your members *as* slaves to righteousness unto holiness. (20) For when you were the slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. (21) What fruit did you have then *in those things* of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. (22) But now, being made free from sin, and having become slaves to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is obviously so much there that we cannot talk about. But I want to just focus in on this statement – “we are not under law, but under grace”. On your own time, go back and spend some time looking at this chapter. But for now, let's just try to understand that grace is a way of relating with God, contrary to law, where now you are a vessel, a slave, an instrument of righteousness. And righteousness is not better choices you make, but is the “newness of life”. It is a person to Whom you have been joined in the resurrection. You are “of His resurrection”. Because you were planted with Him like a seed in that death, you are now “of His resurrection” and bear the fruit of holiness.

And now God relates to you in grace. He sees you dead with the Son of Man, and risen in the Son of God. I'm not talking about you being Jesus. I'm talking about Jesus living in you.

I've been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me. You see, this is your relationship with God. This is grace. And now everything that you do to serve Him, must be the outworking of the indwelling Christ. It must be the expression of His righteousness. All ministry must be grace working in you.

God is only served by grace working in you, or He is not served.

**Heb 12:28** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.

You can only serve God acceptably by offering Him the fragrance of His Son. You can only serve God by giving Him His inheritance in the saints, which is the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 1:23, we are “the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all and all”.

Romans 12 verses 1 – 5, we minister to God according to the grace that has been given to us, and we do that by faith. We do all things by grace according to faith.

Grace is a relationship with God where you are now dead to sin, and can literally be made by God into an instrument of righteousness. An instrument, of His Son. You can be a living sacrifice. You can bear His death, and release His life. And that is how we serve God.

The other night I was sitting in my living room and it started to dawn on me in a new way the horror, the absolute insanity, of thinking that we can serve God in any way that we think is appropriate. That anything that we had to offer would be acceptable unto Him. The whole mentality of “just get out there and do something for God”. It just began to appear to me to be so offensive to the Lord.

The Lord spent hundreds of pages in the Old Covenant detailing the incredibly specific way in which Old Covenant Israel was to offer up to God a testimony of His Son. It was incredibly specific, exclusive, restricted, and precise. Why? Because God wasn't looking for Adam's ideas on worship. God was looking for a manifestation of His Son.

He gave explicit directions on how to build, and do, and sew, and kill, and wash, and offer EVERYTHING. Did you ever hear God say anything like...

“Go build me a tabernacle”.

“God, how do you want me to build it?”.

“Oh...whatever you think looks good. Whatever you're good at”. “Tell you what, you go take a natural gifting test...and however it turns out, do that for me”.

“Israel, go offer me a sacrifice”.

“What kind of sacrifice?”

“Oh, whatever you can catch...any old varmint will do.”

Where should I sacrifice it?

“Oh, I don't suppose it matters. Whatever you think is best...front porch, back yard, compost pile...whatever doesn't make a mess”.

You say that's ludicrous. But that is how we often act in the church.

“Church, worship me in spirit and truth”

“How do I do that Lord?”

“Oh...whatever you think, as long as your heart is in it, I don't care. As long as it gets a lot of people involved or stirs up some emotion, I'm sure I'll appreciate it. After all, I am a God of love.”

“Church, abide in me, apart from me you can do nothing”

“What does that mean Lord?”

“Oh, it just means find a church that you like and serve their vision. It just means get out there and serve me with whatever you've got”

No. Everything of the old was required to be the specific testimony of Christ in order to be acceptable. Everything of the new is required to **be Christ** in order to be acceptable. Everything of the old that was required to be according to the written Word of God. Everything of the new must be the Word Himself working in you.

Grace doesn't put away the Old Covenant. Grace FULFILLS the Old Covenant. That is, this relationship of grace allows us to offer up to God the very spiritual reality of every sacrifice, every offering, and every feast. Grace doesn't annul the law, grace allows for the fulfillment of the Law.

Jesus said that "I have not come to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfill them", that is, to become the very reality of all that they spoke. So now, we in Him, walking by HIS Spirit, can bear in ourselves His dying and offer up to the Father His living. And this is by grace.

[2Co 4:10-11](#) always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body. (11) For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest in our body.

We do not serve God according to our own imaginations. We do not offer whatever is best in our eyes. We serve the Lord in the putting away of the first, and in the manifestation of the second. We serve the Lord in the death of the Old and the life of the New. We serve the Lord in being conformed to His death and attaining to His resurrection. Brothers and sisters, we serve the Lord by grace...or we don't serve Him at all.

It is in grace, and by grace, that you are able to minister to the Lord the expression of His Son. It is in grace and by grace that God has given you something to offer Him. Grace working in you gives back to God what is His, but in even greater expression. But it comes from God. It is God working in you both to will and to work for His pleasure. God provides the death. God provides the life. That is the grace of God.

Abraham and Isaac are walking to the mountain. Isaac says "Hey Dad, where is the sacrifice". Abraham says "the Lord Himself will provide the sacrifice". The Lord Himself will provide this death. The Lord Himself will do it.

Let me close by just saying this. What God has given you in and as the person of His Son is truly sufficient for you. It may not end all tribulation in the world, but it is greater than the world. It may not fix the natural creation, but it raises you up out of it and seats you with Christ in God.

There was something going on in Paul's life that was extremely uncomfortable for Him. It was in the realm of the flesh, it was in the natural. That is one thing we know for sure because he calls it a "thorn in the flesh". Some people think it is a sickness. Some people think it is other things. It doesn't matter. I'm sure that the Spirit of God intentionally didn't describe it. I'm also sure it was quite horrible for him or he wouldn't have mentioned it, knowing what we know about the other things he endured.

What matters is that it buffeted, that is tormented Paul. Three times Paul calls out to the Lord for it to be removed. What does God say? "Paul, I'll fix that situation and it will be sufficient for you"? "Paul, I'll pull out that thorn and it will be sufficient for you"? "Paul, I'll protect you from this in the future, you can count on that being sufficient for you".

No. What does He say? "Paul, my grace is sufficient for you". Paul, what I have given you in Christ, as Christ, is far more than you need for all things. Like Jesus "in this world, you will have tribulations. But I have given you something bigger than the world. I have, in fact, overcome the world".

"Paul, do you not know that in being baptized into Christ, I have baptized you into His death. Paul, do you not know that, though your body is buffeted, your soul dwells with Christ in God. Paul have you not seen that the cross has crucified you to the entire world. Paul, sight accesses circumstances, but faith accesses grace. And the grace in which you stand is sufficient for you."

So Paul goes on to say "well then, Lord...more happily then, I will boast in my weakness, because in my weakness I am made strong".

I can see the Lord saying "Yes Paul, its true that you need help, but my help will never make **you** sufficient. My help will cause you to find the sufficiency of grace. Yes Paul, I hear you crying out to me. But rather than showing you some lesser deliverance, this time let me show you the sufficiency of grace. Yes Paul, I see your tears...but rather than doing something for you in the earth, let me show you what I've given you in the heavens."

But grace will only be as sufficient to you as far as you've seen grace. If your understanding of grace goes only as far as a pardon from transgression, then there is the limit of its sufficiency for your heart. It might be sufficient to take away some feelings of guilt. But Paul needed a greater reality, a greater realization of grace. Frankly, I need a greater realization of grace. I know you do to.

If grace, by His Spirit revealing salvation, becomes in you the working of a death that you couldn't die and a life that you couldn't live...then it truly does overcome the world. It truly can become the sufficiency of all circumstances and situations.