

Infinite grace (Deut. 5)

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] This is a recording of an address given by Mr. Alan Tunley at Wildflower Hall, Catford, on the 4th of April 1964, his subject, Infinite Grace. Deuteronomy 5, and verse 27, Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it. That's, by the way, what the children of Israel said to Moses. And the Lord heard the voice of your words when he spake unto me, and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee. They have well said all that they have spoken, O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever. [00:01:14] Now turn on to chapter 31, of the same book, Deuteronomy 31, verse 7, And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them, and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee, fear not, neither be dismayed. [00:02:10] Verse 20, For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, which floweth with milk and honey, and they have eaten and filled themselves with wax and fat, then will they turn unto other gods and serve them, and provoke me and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness. For it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed, for I know their imagination, which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage, for thou shalt bring the children of Israel unto the land which I swear unto them, and I will be with thee. [00:03:21] Now the book of Numbers, the one before, the book before, just a verse or two there, Numbers 23, verse 19, Numbers 23, verse 19, God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. [00:04:08] He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord, his God, is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt. He hath, as it were, the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought? I want just to read a couple of scriptures in the New Testament. The first one in the second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 8, just one verse, second epistle to the Corinthians in verse 8, chapter 8, verse 9.

[00:05:17] A verse I expect we know by heart. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Now a verse or two in the end of the first epistle of Peter, the last chapter of the first epistle of Peter, verse 8.

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

[00:06:19] Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The word that is in both of these scriptures in the New Testament, grace, has been very much in my mind of late.

[00:07:20] And the more I think over it, the more I am convinced that there is nothing so necessary to us as individuals, as poor human beings, than this matter of grace.

By which I mean, of course, the grace of God.

And as you will see from those few verses that we read in the Old Testament scriptures, it's nothing new that man needs grace.

[00:08:06] But it isn't only that man needs grace at the beginning, when God makes himself known to man, but man needs grace from the beginning to the end of his journey in this world.

To take, first of all, the question in the Old Testament, it serves very usefully as an illustration. Because there we read how, at the time the law was given to the people at Mount Sinai, the people were afraid and they said to Moses, in those verses we read first of all, you go and hear what God has to say and you come and tell us. Don't let God speak to us direct. And we'll do all that God says we ought to do. [00:09:09] And you know, God was listening. He says, there I have heard all those words. Oh, that there were such a heart in them, that they would do these things. It's all very well for us to make our promises, but God looks deeper than the surface. And in their case, and in our case too, that is the word, oh that there were such a heart in them. But nevertheless, the grace of God, and it was grace indeed, took up those people and he carried them right away as we know, and took them into a promised land. Well, there was the grace that found. In this first scripture in Corinthians, we get the grace that found us. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was rich and for our sake became poor. [00:10:03] But that is, as I said, not the end of our need of grace. There is grace to begin, there is grace all the way through. Well now, I think that's clearly seen too, in connection with Israel, in that second scripture that we read in the 31st chapter of Deuteronomy. There we get both sides of the question. First of all, Moses speaks to Joshua. Now he says Joshua, the Lord's going to take me away, and you've got to be in charge.

Now you are going to take these people into the promised land. You must go in with them. Yes, we might say, well that was what God had promised to do. True it was. But don't let us forget, at the beginning, God had read their hearts and he says, well I would that there were such a heart in them.

[00:11:07] And it's the same class of people, and not the same generation, but their children, the same

class of people, the same sort of heart. They were there just at the doorstep, ready to step in to the promised land. Now God says to Joshua through Moses, you are going in with these people. The promise of God is going to be fulfilled. He is going to take them in. Whatever they are in themselves, the grace of God is going to take them in. And then in those other verses, we get God, as it were, drawing Moses aside. And he says, now I know what's going to happen to these people. They're going to turn away from me as soon as they get in the land. That's just their heart, that's their makeup. And although grace is going to put them into the land, there they are, they're going to turn their back upon God, and they're going to do just what suits them. [00:12:04] And we find it so, if we follow the history through, very soon they were in difficulty through their own indifference. Now there's just an illustration that grace is necessary, not only for the beginning, but grace all the way through.

And because there was that evil heart in them, God didn't say, I'm not going to take you in. He'd made a promise. And we must remember that in connection with what God does with us. When God picks us up in grace, he doesn't put us down in disgust. We might be disgusted with ourselves. We might find there's all sorts of things in ourselves that we can't commend, in fact we hate it. But God isn't going to put us down just because we're not perfect, like angels walking through the world. [00:13:03] And that's just the illustration we get from the Old Testament. Grace picked up the people. Grace brought them to the edge of the land and told Joshua to take them in, spite of what they were. God saw below the surface they might have looked all right as men of war, but he looked right down into their hearts and he knew what grace they still would need. So now let's get to ourselves as we are represented here in these scriptures in the New Testament. And we shall find that we need the grace of God at the beginning.

And should there be anyone here who doesn't know that grace for themselves, let's have a look at this verse first in the second epistle to the Corinthians. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

[00:14:13] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, what did it do?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has met our need. We are here in this world as those who by nature are quite content to go on in it. I say quite content with all sorts of evil things in our hearts and men left to themselves as we see in the world today, they're not content. But they're content to turn their backs upon God and his word. And usually if anything is put in front of them today, connected with eternity or connected with God, there is no interest and no response. [00:15:01] And in all our hearts that is the foundation, that is what we are by nature. But God in his grace, he has chosen to reveal himself in infinite grace in the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. He has come in, he has sent his beloved son at the time when man has been proved an absolute failure. We go all through the Old Testament and we find man is a failure from beginning to end. And then God sends his beloved son who comes in grace and he enters into the ranks of creaturehood and he walks here as a man.

Well now there's wondrous grace there because this one who walked us was the one who was the eternal and is the eternal son of God. [00:16:01] And he is the one of whom we read in that second chapter of Philippians who was seated with his father in the heavens. Let's read it to get it correctly. It says, being in the form of God he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He was with God as John says and he was God. And what did he do?

He came down. He made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was

made in likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself to death, became obedient, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Well now because you and I are what we are, heaven's beloved one was here in that condition.

[00:17:04] He came in mighty grace down into this world and he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

He was here in all his perfection and yet that perfection never repelled one who really wanted to know him, who really had a need and came to him. His perfection was there but he was ready always to meet the need of the sinner or the sick or whatever they were, whatever ailments they had. He was ready and he was able but he also met with the scorn of this world.

Those who were righteous in themselves who thought they were sufficient, who thought their standard of goodness God must receive. He met with them and he endured their scorning, he endured their scoffing and what else? [00:18:09] He went even further than that and he went to Calvary's cross for us. He was there as the one who bore our sins and our iniquities, the one who was that perfect trespass offering. Remember the words of the psalmist, then I restored that which I took not away. And then the words of the prophet Isaiah too, remember those, he was a lamb, a sheep dumb before her shearers so he opened not his mouth.

Is there anything which annoys us and makes us more angry than someone coming along and accusing us of something that we didn't do? We're indignant in a moment, we flare up, we don't like it but here is heaven's beloved one, here in this world as God's lamb to bear away the sin of the world. [00:19:12] Standing there before the judgment of God and not opening his mouth because of the things that were put upon him which were not his. He willingly took our sins and iniquities on him, he answered there for he bore there that which was ours to bear but he bore it without a murmur. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be made rich. Well there is the grace of our Lord Jesus that meets us in our need and it picks us up and brings us into the family of God. [00:20:02] Brings us into the place of favor as it says here that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Well now that is not the end and it is principally the grace that meets our need as we pass along through this world that is before me because we so often find that we get discouraged, we're apt to be discouraged when we find that we're not as good as we ought to be.

But we can bear in mind what we've had already in connection with Israel. God knew exactly what was in their hearts but it made no difference to what grace would do on their behalf. And let us get this firmly in our minds that this grace that meets us here in this verse in Corinthians is the grace that makes us the Lord's. [00:21:11] It makes us his. The Lord Jesus is like that pearl merchant that we read of in the 13th of Matthew. Seeking goodly pearls and when he has found one of great price, great value he gives all that he has for the joy of the possession of that pearl. Well that's the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards you and me. He buys us for himself and he's very jealous of his possessions. He's not going to put us down. He's not going to let us go because we're not quite what we ought to be. We are his. Well now, to take an example, because I take this one, I'm sure neither you nor I will want to lay any blame upon this beloved servant of God [00:22:13] because I'm sure there's not one of us can match him in his faith or in any other way. I'm speaking of Peter. And there is an occasion that I want to refer to in connection with Peter which will serve for us as an illustration of what this grace can do that brings us along on our journey after grace has brought us, has bought

us and made us to belong to the Lord. We get in the 22nd of Luke, you needn't turn to it, I expect you remember, that the Lord says to Simon, [00:23:01] Simon, Simon, behold Satan has the desire to have you that he may sift you as wheat.

But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.

I think we can very well couple this with what he wrote in the end of his first epistle about Satan as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He was told to strengthen his brethren afterwards and I believe that is what he had in mind. He had been, as we see here, the subject of attack. And we shall find as we pass along in life's journey that we get these attacks and we need also the grace of God to meet us in that need.

[00:24:06] I don't like talking about myself but there is a very apt illustration I think that I can give you. I don't know if I've ever told it before but it was in this connection. I was on one occasion going abroad on business and I had been to the same place many times, dealt with the same people many times, and in the mercy of God had been able to go and come with his blessing. But on this particular instance I couldn't get it out of my mind that there was danger in the way. That somehow or other Satan was going to trip me up and there would be a tumble.

[00:25:03] Well I was very much cast on the Lord about it and when I got into the train, I was going on the night train, got into my little cubicle, sat down on the bed and thought well it's too early to go to bed yet, I'll have a read. I got a book out that I had with me and I remembered that someone had given me a little motto card. I hadn't got time to read it at the time, I just said thank you very much and put it in my book and shut it up. I said I'll use that as a bookmark. I sat down on the bed and I opened the book and there was this little motto card. And it was a very short little piece that I've never forgotten. Infinitely tender, infinitely true, understanding all things, understanding you.

[00:26:05] Well I thought that's exactly what I want. I'm afraid of something. There's this infinite tenderness, there's infinite truth and one who understands me. And so I was able to go with that in my mind, in my heart and I went round the business and came back again in the mercy of God and there was no time or opportunity for anything that I had feared might happen. Well now that's just the way I believe that we get the truth presented here in connection with Peter. And it may happen in your lives just the same as it happened in mine and it happened in Peter's. Here was an occasion where there was something going on behind the scenes. Something we don't know about, but thank God there is one who does. [00:27:04] And Peter with all his strength, his quickness, his zeal, it sometimes led him into trouble.

And I believe with the best of intentions Peter came into this difficulty and that's just how the enemy corners us. Here was Peter, he wanted to follow the Lord. And there was one inside there that knew Peter and knew the high priest and he called him in and he got him inside. But once he was inside, he was amongst the world's people, he sat by the world's fire and he got into trouble. But it's just the artful way in which the enemy comes along and he engineers a position and he gets us into it and then down we go. But here was the Lord, he knew all about this and he just gives Peter a warning. [00:28:05] But the Lord had operated before then, he says I've prayed for you Peter that your faith fail not. Well now that is just the kind of circumstance that we are apt to get into, but we can see from the Scriptures how readily help can be found.

Well now, we might think to ourselves, well now, that's all right.

Peter had the Lord Jesus at hand.

He had him to watch, he had him to walk with, he could go to him for comfort, for counsel. He was there to protect him, to guide him. What about poor me?

Supposing I get into trouble, what am I to do? And we shall get into trouble.

[00:29:04] I don't know that we've got time to go into it now. But if we were to look into the epistle to Romans, we would find there how the Apostle in the 5th chapter and 6th chapter, he very beautifully sets out the theory of our salvation and our establishment, our justification and so forth. He sets it out very beautifully there. And then in the 7th chapter, you get someone who's trying to put it into practice.

But he finds he hasn't got any strength.

He finds that he can't do it.

He sees himself laid in the grave, dead with Christ. He says the old nature is dead. And he very soon finds when he gets outside that it's not dead. [00:30:03] And he tries to knock it down and it comes up and he can't get it, he can't deal with it, it's too strong for him. But then when we get on to the 8th chapter, we read where the power comes from. We read that we are walking now in the Spirit.

What does that mean? That we have the power of the Spirit of God to help us to walk. And that it is the Spirit of God that brings us along and dwells within us and helps us, leads us, intercedes for us and deals with us. So that God has prepared for this situation which will inevitably arise.

So that if we look on to the 8th chapter of Romans, then we see there what provision there is made for us in our journey in the grace and mercy of God. [00:31:02] First of all, perhaps we should go back a little to the days of Peter. Because there we see not only that the Lord Jesus was there to work for and with Peter and the rest.

But in the 17th chapter, we come along to the time when he says, he speaks to his father about these disciples. He says, Father, I'm going away. I can't stay with them any longer. I have to go, but I commend to you. And he wants the father to keep them in this world. And then you will remember that towards the end of that prayer, he says, Father, I pray not for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. And so not only had Peter the prayer of the Lord Jesus when he says, I prayed for you that your faith fail not. [00:32:07] But we have also in the 17th chapter, his prayer for Peter and for Andrew and for all the rest. And right down through time, right down to our day for us.

And he prays there that they may be kept, kept from the evil, not taken out of the world. No, they are to serve a purpose here. The purpose of the Lord Jesus is that we should be able to walk through this world with him and be preserved by the power of God to be a witness for him here. And so he prays to his father that we may be kept day by day and that we may be kept not only by the power of God direct. But he says, I have given them thy word and this is the word that sets them apart from the world. [00:33:05] Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Now that very beautifully I think connects up with the end of the 8th chapter of Romans. Because when we know that the Lord Jesus has gone back, we haven't lost contact with him as the one who is still praying for us, who is still

carrying us in his needs. But we read there, as he sums the chapter up, he says, it is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. So his prayer didn't finish with the end of the 17th chapter of John. [00:34:03] He's gone back into the glory and he sat down there and he is our intercessor, who also maketh intercession for us.

So then we dare not say that we haven't got the Lord Jesus to foreknow our needs and to go to the father about them. We have, he is there to pray for us, to make intercession for us and if we stumble, as we read in the epistle of John, we have him there as our advocate to take our case up before the father. And then to go back in that chapter, the 8th of Romans a little bit, to what I was saying about the spirit of God. We have the spirit dwelling within to be our strength and our guide, to strengthen that life, that inner life which God has given us, that new life. [00:35:02] But he does other things here. I must read you a few verses here because it's so much better expressed than I can do it. It says, we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body. It isn't only, I think, the groaning of our pains and aches and difficulties, but I believe it's also the fact that we still have this horrible evil nature within us and we've still got to be fighting it. We ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for? [00:36:03] But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities. This is the verse.

For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Well now here then is another who is interceding. You remember when the Lord Jesus was speaking to his disciples, he spoke to them of another comforter.

He was going away and he says I'm going to send you another comforter. Another comforter because he would be taking his place, but if I put it this way, not displacing him.

[00:37:14] We have friends sometimes, bosom friends, and they know us and we know them.

And we can meet together, we have common topics, and we all know, we know one another, what we think about different things, and we get on well together. And the time comes perhaps when that friend is called home. We have other friends and perhaps another friend becomes much more to us than before.

But it's not like the old friend, it's another friend, different in another sense. [00:38:01] He has different thoughts, he's a different personality, different way of expressing himself. But that's not what we get with this friend, this comforter. Although he's spoken of as another comforter, he is just like the one who has gone into heaven. And he is going to speak the same things. He is going to take the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and make them good to us. He is going to minister the things of Christ to us. So that out of the word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have just that same connection as the apostles had in their day. As the ministrations of the Lord Jesus were made to them, so in the power of the Spirit of God they are made to us today. Just as the Lord Jesus interceded for Peter on that day, so now he intercedes for us in the glory of heaven. [00:39:05] And just as we often get ourselves

into difficulties and may be also unaware of the things that are brewing behind the scenes, like Peter was on that occasion, we have the Spirit of God with all knowledge knowing what's going on. And is able to make expression in prayer to God for us, to the Father for us.

With things that we can't pray about because we don't understand, we don't know what's going on. But the Spirit of God does, the Lord Jesus does. And they go to the Father and they pray that we might be kept, that we might be preserved in our difficulties, that we might know the way around our difficulties, that we might be able to glorify God in them. And then there's just one other scripture that I'll remind you of. [00:40:04] I think we all know it. It's in the end of Jude. And I think it should confirm our faith in connection with this intercession of the Spirit and the intercession of the Lord Jesus that the grace of God may flow to us. It speaks there of to him that is able to keep, to him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen. Now surely it must be an immense comfort to us when we know what poor stumbling creatures we are.

[00:41:03] Apt to fail, ignorant, dull. What a comfort to know that not only have we the Spirit of God dwelling in us but we have the Spirit of God interceding for us in things that we don't understand and can't express. We have the Lord Jesus in heaven also making intercession for us.

And that that intercession goes up to one who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Well may we in the power of the Spirit be able to lay hold of these precious things that we may be encouraged in our pathway here and not discouraged because we are disgusted with ourselves. [00:42:01] Let's look away from ourselves and look to heaven where Christ is and rejoice in the ministrations of the Spirit of God who will speak to us of the things of Christ here.