

Grace (John 9)

Part 1

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[00:00:01] But the remark made on Monday, as to the overabounding grace of God, where sin has abounded, grace has overabounded.

And in being before the Lord, these scriptures came before me, that we might have some refreshing in our minds and in our hearts regarding the way in which God has moved.

When we go back to the time of John the Baptist and find him there preaching on the banks of Jordan, and we find that he is heralding one that's going to come after him.

What a lovely description we get in this first chapter of the one that is coming. He's put forward in the first verse that we read as the true light, the one that is going to set forth in absolute sincerity the heart and the mind of God, the true light [00:01:07] that lights the world.

There was going to be no darkness. It was going to be completely dispelled and along with that there was to be the opening up before the eyes of those that came to believe, they were going to have their eyes open as to how God was shining.

He was shining out in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know these verses well. He was in the world, he had made the world, and those that he came to, his own people refused him.

But he was the true light.

And what was coming in was something that was entirely new. What had been adhered to in the past dispensation had failed.

And we don't have to look far to see that man fails everywhere. [00:02:05] We go back to the Garden of Eden and we find there that conditions were absolutely perfect. You couldn't have got better conditions and man messed it up entirely.

And so we go through the different eras of which God dealt with man and we find that every time man failed.

And he failed under the law. The law was good, it was right, it was proper. But what it showed was

the shortcomings in the heart of mankind.

And so we find in this chapter that the way of blessing comes from God and the law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

[00:03:03] That's something we teach in the Sunday school or we get the children to memorise it and it's a verse no doubt we've learnt from childhood. But the real impact needs to come home time and time again, a fresh touch as to what came by Jesus Christ, something entirely new. We go back through the Old Testament, we find time and time again there were touches, there were glimpses of grace.

But now it was coming embodied in a person expressing what was really in the heart of God and it was there and it came through God's beloved son.

So we find that he came to his own, his own received him not but as many as received him to them gave he the power to become the children of God even to them that believe on his name. You see God was moving out. He was looking for a people to secure for himself.

[00:04:02] He knew that no matter what man could do, tried to do, had done in the past and perhaps even had in mind to do in the future, it was going to fail. The only way that man was going to come into blessing was through the grace of God. So Jesus came, one that was proclaimed as John, that was so worthy, the one that he's just opening up the door for, to let the true light shine.

And it says here, the word was made flesh, dwelt among us, we beheld its glory, the glory is of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It's lovely to see that, to see the order in which the Spirit of God gives us this. It's not truth and grace, it's grace and truth.

And it is embodied in Jesus, the full expression of what was in the heart of God was there [00:05:05] in the person of his beloved son. All the wonderful, the wonderful heralding for, the wonderful exposure of what was there in the mind of God, and the way in which that light shone. You see there was no darkness in him at all, he came here perfectly expressing the will and the heart of God.

Wonderful to see what was there in the person, grace and truth.

The law hadn't failed, man had failed, as against the law.

The law was good, the law was right, but man couldn't attain to what God had put forth.

He failed miserably, but now something's coming in, God's moving, and he's moving in grace.

[00:06:02] Of his fullness have we, have all we received, and grace upon grace. And then he says, the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

To think of a point in the history of the world when something new and living was just breaking in upon the mind and the heart of mankind.

Never been anything like it before, and dear brethren we know there's never been anything like it since.

That which was perfectly expressed in the eternal Son of God, wonderful expression.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. It didn't just appear, it came and it stayed.

And we know that right through now, right to the present day in which we live, the grace [00:07:01] and the truth is still coming through from God, because Jesus has been here, he's fulfilled the will of God, he has perfectly carried out all that was in the heart of God.

And so grace was set on, and it stays, and it's pouring out even today.

That lovely verse that was referred to on Monday, and I read it in passing through to Ephesians 2, where grace has abounded, where sin has abounded, grace has over-abounded.

To see that when God moves there is absolutely nothing that is going to stop his will going through to fruition. Grace had abounded, sin had abounded alright, and the law showed that up. The more the law was held up, the more the law was repeated, the more it showed the short coming of mankind.

[00:08:04] So the law was brought in just to show how far man was away from God.

God made provision under the old economy, there was that which was provided for by God, a way through.

But how man failed time and time again.

But now grace is here in the person of Christ.

And it's come in the order that God would have it.

That is, he'd moved out in wonderful favour towards us, unmerited favour toward us is expressed in Jesus Christ.

And the truth, of course, flows on right behind.

We're not able to be taken up with this person, we've been occupied with him for a few days. [00:09:01] And it's filled the hearts of every true believer. I do trust that every one of us here that was able to gather together over the past weekend had their hearts touched and thrilled and drawn out, because we were speaking our remarks, our attention, our affections, all drawn to this blessed person who expressed the heart of God.

So those verses that we read, so plain, the law entered that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Wonderful, you know, if we just leave matters with God, things will work through. He gives us the order here, grace and truth. And then he says that grace is going to reign, but how does it reign? [00:10:02] Through righteousness. And for the full expression of grace to be enjoyed by each one of us, it must come through the

righteousness being expressed, and that was seen at the cross of Calvary. And the Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself every stroke of judgment so that we might come into the enjoyment of the grace of God.

Wonderful to see that God does everything perfectly.

It was there in the Lord Jesus, and every work that he did and every word that he uttered brought glory to God.

And going right through so that grace might reign, grace was there, but so that grace might reign, righteousness must be fulfilled.

And that's why Jesus went to the cross, because we come in because of what Jesus has done.

[00:11:06] And so the superabounding grace of God is seen.

And I believe, dear brethren, that the more we see what Christ has done and what we've been extricated from by the mercy and grace of God, it will set us on the right path as worshippers of God.

Not only that our hearts may go out in thankfulness, but that we may worship God when we realise that it was absolutely nothing on our part that merited this favour, but it was entirely from the divine side. And God has moved, expressed it in Jesus, and now we get the instruction. So let us go to Ephesians 2, because that is the chapter that I thought we could consider for the few moments remaining tonight.

[00:12:02] We find in the epistle to the Ephesians that God starts at the top. It's not a matter of working through to a pinnacle, that God starts at the very top and he moves out in Ephesians, and he expresses his thoughts. And from the divine side we see that which is perfect. All that is being brought about because of what the Lord Jesus has done. So back in the first chapter we get the pinnacle, and then as God moves through unfolding the precious truths that are ours because we're a heavenly company, he goes through to the functioning in chapter 4 and the responsibilities in chapters 5 and 6.

But I believe we come into the full game of what our responsibility is before God so that we will work it through and it will be to the divine pattern as long as we have a right [00:13:07] understanding and appreciation of what God sees through his vast eternal plan, bringing us into blessing, marking us out before the earth's foundations were laid. And so that from God's side he sees the perfect article, he sees that which is perfect, he sees that the accomplishment of all his plans before time began.

But then as they unfold we find that there are responsibilities and that's towards the end of the epistle. But in this chapter he shows us the way in which we come into these things.

God has established the blessing, it's there, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ that we find in chapter 1 and then as the chapter 1 goes through we [00:14:02] find what the blessings are, they're there in Christ, they're established by God and they're ours and we have a right to them but it's good to be reminded as to how we come into them and that's why chapter 2 is brought in.

So he says you've been dead in trespasses and sins, oh it's good for us to look within sometimes and see what we've been saved from and to realise that if God hadn't moved out in grace and secured us because of the righteous basis laid by the work of Christ then we would have absolutely no part in the things of God at all. The apostle reminds the saints, doesn't he, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he goes through that list of those that have no part in the kingdom of God but he says of such were some of you but you're washed, you see the grace of God is brought out.

God has moved toward us because we read that while we were yet sinners Christ died for [00:15:06] us. So God has moved from his side toward us and that's what we see so beautifully expressed in this chapter. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our conversation in time past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of God even as others.

But God, you see the apostle is reminding the saints at Ephesus, you say well what verses to be brought into an epistle where high church truths are taught but I believe the spirit of God would have us reminded dear brethren of what we've been saved from.

As Paul says to the Corinthians of such were some of you and here at Ephesus he takes up [00:16:02] the same strain wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.

Oh dear brethren we realize when we look back and see the wonderful grace of God that was meted out toward us when we came to know Christ as our savior to realize that we were sinners, we were in darkness, we didn't know what the light of God meant, we didn't know the mercy, we didn't know the grace, we didn't know the love, dead in trespasses and sin that was our state.

You know it's good sometimes to hear a brother or a sister's testimony. I know some people, some groups of Christians go overboard on testimony. We don't even get on the board at all. I believe that it's good for us to go over sometimes and give our testimony before other Christians. I don't say that we should repeat and go over and over and perhaps embellish it when it doesn't sound too interesting at times but just to give a clear account of how God saved [00:17:05] us by his marvelous grace, that he brought us to Christ, that we were saved. Not to glory in our past and say we were a terrible person, you want to hear me, what I used to get up to and then somebody else gets up in their testimony and says oh well that was pretty tame, you want to listen to what I was saved from. It's not a matter of competition, it's a matter of seeing what God has saved us from and what he's brought us to and it's all because of what Jesus has done. And what do we see right through? The grace of God. Why should he choose me?

You know I'm quite sure dear brethren that every one of us have got into the presence of God at times and say well why me, why me, why should it be that I was singled out by the grace of God and brought to repentance and brought to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour, when there are thousands going down the road to destruction. [00:18:04] Why me?

It's the grace of God, the grace of God.

What else?

So Paul says I'm bringing you high church truths, I'm bringing you instruction, but I want you to be

reminded that once you walked according to the course of this world, you were under the influence of the prince of the pale of the air. You were taken up with all the gross wickedness and sin, but God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sin have quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. I know we've heard ministry on this chapter time and time again, I'm quite sure every one of us here must have heard it at least a dozen times in memory, maybe a lot more.

[00:19:04] But I just want to draw attention to this, that the grace of God is woven right through this chapter, pointing out that but for his mercy and his goodness and his marvellous grace, there would be none of us here in this hall tonight with our sins forgiven, because there is absolutely nothing you and I have done to merit favour with God, nothing at all. God has moved toward us and there was absolutely nothing in our lives or in our hearts or in our actions that God could say, well there's a person I can bless. There was nothing, not in any one of us, dead in trespasses and sin, no response to God at all.

We get that in Romans don't we, that all, and that includes every one of us here, want to go our own way.

If we're given a choice, we don't choose Christ. [00:20:04] If we're given a choice, we choose what is evil and what is wrong. That's our human nature, that's the way we're made. We don't choose Christ, God has chosen us, and God in his mercy has brought us to repentance to realise that we've needed a saviour and we've come to know Christ as the only one that was able to save us.

And here, what blessings are flowing, he's quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, but I want to draw attention to verse 7, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. That's the day of display, and that's what God is looking for. He's looking for souls that they may be brought to Christ, that in the vast day of display [00:21:01] there will be the glory of his marvellous grace, so that all might see that it was his grace that brought this company that have been redeemed into blessing. The work of Christ stands alone, but it was God's grace that brought it about. Wonderful, it's going to cause the myriads to fall in the presence of God and worship and adore him, and so in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace.

That doesn't mean to say he's going to keep on showing grace and people are going to be saved.

It means that it is going to be displayed in a coming day, the glory of the grace of God in all those that are gathered to be with him forever.

Wonderful, to realise that Christ of course is in the midst, he's the one that brought it all about, but God showed grace, and that is going to be the cause of worship flow throughout [00:22:05] the eternal ages. It's going to be displayed, and to realise, dear brethren, that we are never going to lose sight of the fact that we are there in the presence of God because of his marvellous grace.

We need to enter into the enjoyment of this more and more now, or let's don't stand on the perimeter. Is there any Christian here tonight that just standing on the perimeter, got your sins forgiven and quite glad just to go along without any commitment to Christ, without any welling up of worship and praise? Where are you in your history before God, dear, dear believing friend? You're standing out on the perimeter, not in the enjoyment of all these things that are flowing through from God, or to realise that

you've been saved, you've been brought out of darkness into light, by the grace of God, established firmly before God so that [00:23:05] you're able to stand there because of what Jesus has done. No favour from our side, but favour from God's side.

By grace say you say, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Or if it was of works, that you know there'd be a queue up at the gospel meeting, wouldn't there?

If it was works, come and display your works, and what you do for God, and what you don't do in regard to evil, and God there perhaps just standing, looking at the list, and if you get ten out of ten in the questions that are asked, you're in. God doesn't work like that.

Through a grace flow, the established righteous basis there in the work of Christ, and coming to the realisation that we're sinners before God, and realise that all is being done, and [00:24:05] God accepts us through faith.

And then being brought into this, dear believing friends, being brought into this, how do we enjoy it?

Are you enjoying your Christianity? Can you say, every day and every night, as you commit the night to God, or pray in the morning before you start the day, that you're so glad that you're a Christian, that you are enjoying the things of Jesus Christ?

That you're in communion with God?

That your heart is full of thanksgiving and praise, realising that God has moved and brought you into blessing, and established you on a righteous basis because of the work of Christ, so that you're a worshipper of God?

Is that your pathway? [00:25:01] Is that the way you're responding?

Or that we might enter into this, we might enjoy it, or don't leave it dear friend, until the time of, when we're caught up and we have a glorified body and we're there in the presence of the Lord, or there worshipping God, God wants to worship us now.

He wants us in the game of the blessings now, and the full enjoyment of it, so that we know what it is to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That's not a reference to when we get to heaven. That's an experience that we should be going through now, sitting in the heavenlies, in Christ. Oh, it's there, the basis is established, and we're able to come right in because of the grace of God.

[00:26:01] We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember, he says, that ye being in the time past Gentiles in the flesh, and that's us. We were those amongst the uncircumcised. We were the ones he speaks of in verse 12 as no hopers, we were all no hopers. We were outside Israel.

We were amongst the Gentile nations, there was absolutely no special place. We were outsiders, rank outsiders, but brought in through the grace of God, brought into one body, brought into one company, middle wall of partition being broken down so that the saved Jew and the saved Gentile

can come and worship together.

This is divine grace that we should be brought in.

[00:27:03] When you realise that the prophets spoke of us, that those that were not my people are now my people. That's where we were, we were not the people of God, but are now by divine grace the people of God. So he says that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Wonderful blessings.

This was all brought about dear brethren because of the grace of God. Brought close by the blood of Christ.

There's the basis, there's our standing, we've got access right through to God. Marvellous.

There was nothing that you and I could do to merit it and there's nothing you and I can do to get the access to God. [00:28:09] It's all wide open.

That's why we should be enjoying our Christianity. That's why we should be enthusiastic about the things of God. Realising that God has moved and God has brought us in and God is maintaining us.

That's our present portion. Here it is in this chapter, that's our present portion. Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Do we realise dear brethren that we are brought right in, in closeness to God. In a nearness that under the old dispensation we would have absolutely no hope. None at all, none at all.

[00:29:04] But now we are made close for he is our peace.

He is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us having abolished in his flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. For to make in himself of twain one new man so making peace and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross having slain the enmity thereby. Came and preached peace to you which were far off and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one's spirit unto the Father. This is where the grace of God leads us dear brethren. Made one.

Whatever our background Jew or Gentile, made one. Only God could do this. You go back through the four Gospels and you could see that it was absolutely impossible for a Jew and Gentile to get on together. [00:30:03] The Jew would have nothing to do with the Gentile and the Gentile would have no standing, he would have no right. But through the wonderful work of Christ expressing the heart and the grace of God all are brought in.

Both sides.

The middle wall of partition is broken down and we are made one in Christ.

This is pure grace.

But it works.

You know dear brethren, the plans of God always work.

They never fail.

And when Jesus Christ went to the cross and suffered there, it was establishing a basis and breaking down the division between Jew and Gentile.

And we are brought in and that beautiful verse 18, through him, through Christ, we both, Jew and Gentile, [00:31:01] have access by one's spirit unto the Father.

This is a wonderful verse.

Expressing the three persons of the Godhead, bringing in those that were so far apart, they were poles apart, but bringing into one.

And so it's through Christ, by the Spirit, we have access to the Father.

And dear brethren, this is what we should be enjoying. Access to the Father so that worship flows from our hearts to God because the way is open.

Marvellous grace. You know when we come together to remember the Lord Jesus, and I do trust each one of us here loves the Lord enough to remember him, [00:32:02] the breaking of bread. Do we all love the Lord?

Do we all do what the Lord requests of us?

If we love him, he says, quite plainly in the word, if we love him, we do what he says, we keep his commandments. And if we don't keep his commandments, we've got to look right into our hearts and question ourselves as to whether we are true lovers of Christ.

The Lord knows the heart, you know you're standing before God. But if we are lovers of Christ, and we are expressing what is due to his holy name, when we come together, it's through the grace of God.

The fact that we are able to draw apart and remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread, that is the grace of God that allows it.

The fact that we're able to give thanks to the Lord Jesus [00:33:03] for all that he's done, that's the grace of God.

And the fact that we're able to worship the Father, that too is pure grace.

Because we've been brought from such a distance into a blessed relationship with God the Father.

This is what grace does. You know, dear brethren, it doesn't stop at the cross. It doesn't stop at Pentecost.

It goes right on through into eternity.

And here we are today, we're enjoying because the grace of God was told out of Calvary, and we're enjoying the grace because of what was expressed at Pentecost. And we are those that are privileged through the work of Jesus to have our bodies temple of the Holy Ghost. This is the grace of God.

[00:34:03] We're a privileged people and we need to be enjoying what God wants us to enjoy, so that he might have a portion from the hearts of every one of us. And he goes on in the chapter to see, to show us what grace brings us into.

We are no more strangers and foreigners, verse 19, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit. Think of what we are brought into through divine grace. Are we enjoying these things?

Fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, [00:35:02] the house over which the Lord rules, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit. Now the Apostle Paul is not just singling out the saints at Ephesus for this, he's including those of us in Walthold Hall tonight. Habitation of God.

This, dear brethren, I would say is holy ground.

To realise that through the grace of God built upon the foundation that is laid by the finished work of Christ, the righteous basis upon which God can build, we are brought into a holy relationship, [00:36:01] not only access to God the Father, but a place that is termed the habitation of God, where God can dwell among his people. And this is why a clean place has to be kept for the Lord. Not a matter that we cut ourselves off. It's not a matter that there is a little tight circle that nobody else can come in amongst. It's a matter of enjoying what grace has brought us into. It's a matter of moving forward as worshippers of God and keeping a clean place because that is where God dwells.

Are we moving, dear brethren, in a way that is pleasing to God, is right before God, so that we can be amongst the people of God that is termed the temple of God.

[00:37:05] And this, dear brethren, should cause us to get humbly into God's presence.

And if we haven't got into God's presence lately, I would say that each brother and sister, each one of us, tonight should get into the presence of God and search out our hearts to see what there is in our own lives, in our own actions, as to the places that we may go that will in any way defile what is the habitation of God.

Because these are holy truths and we're on holy ground when we get to these verses at the close of chapter 2.

And as those that have been born again truly and know Christ as our Saviour, we need to search out our lives in the presence of a holy God. [00:38:04] He knows all about us.

He knows exactly where we stand before him. He knows if there's something that's hindering the full flow of worship to him.

And he knows, as he comes amongst his people, if there are some that are not right with him. So this, let me say again, is holy ground.

Built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. He's speaking about those upon whom the grace of God has come.

He's speaking to those that have been in time past walking in the course of this world according to the Prince of the Power of the Air and amongst the children of disobedience. [00:39:03] He's speaking to those that have come to Christ and they've come out of us. And they are now seen as a place that is fit for God to come to.

That's not this fall.

It's the coming together of the people of God and we should be right before God. The divine provision is there for each one of us to be right with God and we need to see that we keep short accounts with God because if the Word tells us that ye may be framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord in whom ye are also builded together for inhabitation of God through the Spirit, we need to believe the holy scriptures. And that's what God wants to bring us into and he wants us to enjoy it now.

And let me say if we're not enjoying it, dear brother and sister in Christ, don't blame God [00:40:02] because God has made the righteous basis, he's made the way open, he's given us the instruction on how to walk and he tells us what he expects of each one of us and we need to see that there is a clean place for him to dwell.

In our lives individually it's got to start there but if I'm going on with something that is not right before God then this must be confessed.

The righteous basis is there because of what Jesus has done to avail ourselves of the blood to get right before God so that in no way do I defile the comings together of the Lord's people so that the presence of the Lord is there, there is freedom of worship, there is praise flowing because people that come together to the Lord's name are there because of a marvellous grace of God, [00:41:04] a realisation that it is entirely from the divine side that brings us into blessing and as having a real appreciation of this then keeping a clean place for God to dwell.

Dear brethren we're in the closing days, the Lord Jesus Christ is soon going to come and we look around and we see that it seems as though everything's crumbling and falling apart and we're growing fewer and fewer. Dear brethren let us go on in what is right before God. The righteous basis is laid and it's pure grace that has brought us into it and it's grace that will maintain us in the pathway until we hear that assembly shout. Dear brethren may we not only be receiving it but in the full enjoyment of it and walking in a way that is right before God because God is a holy God and he requires in us a clean heart.

[00:42:03] He's made the provision, we should avail ourselves of it and then the worship will flow and

God will get his portion. That's what he's looking for, he's looking for a portion from your heart and from mine and we can come into this and we can give God what is due to his holy name as we have a real sense of the divine presence and that we are walking in the right path before him. May we be helped in these things dear brethren because we don't know how much time is left to any one of us but let us be walking true to our calling in the full enjoyment of divine grace and giving the Lord Jesus the place that he looks for in our hearts and in our comings together so that worship might flow.