

Soteriology
Lesson 3
The Provision of Grace Part One

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Take your Bibles and go to Ephesians chapter two. Our subject for today, another wonderful doctrine of our salvation, and that is grace. Grace provides everything that we have in Christ. That's why we call it "the provision of grace." It provides everything. There's nothing that you and I have that does not come from God's wonderful grace.

Now the word grace itself, which appears 178 times in the Bible—notice 131 in the New Testament. The Greek word, *charis*, is also the word, gift. Gift. We speak about the Eucharist. It comes from *charis* and the word *eu*, E-U, which means well or good. The good gift (meaning of Christ's death on our behalf) so we take the bread and the cup to remember it. They call it Eucharist or our communion.

Sometimes it's translated, give thanks. *Eucharisteō* from *charis* means to give well. And in this case, to give appreciation, adoration, worship, gratefulness to God. And so the word grace, is in the word thanks in the Bible. So actually we could extend this way out, *charizomai*, to give thanks, twenty-three times.

Let's read Ephesians 2:1-10. Now before we do, look back at chapter 1, verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of His [what?] grace [verse 7] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." There it is again. It's a theme throughout God's Word and especially the book of Ephesians. Now chapter 2, beginning at verse 1 down to verse 10,

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 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:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved;

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Now that's a great passage, just a wonderful, wonderful text on the grace of God. We are saved by grace, the Bible says.

When we begin to break this down, there's a lot of interesting things in the Bible. But turn to Romans, please for a moment. Romans and look at 11:6 and I want to show you how predestination and grace are blended together. Now the issue in Romans 9, 10 and 11 is God's relationship to the Jews. Verse 1 of chapter 11 says, "Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!" Verse 2 says, "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." Now, you remember back in chapter 9, which we looked at our last time together, that we found out that the sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, were in fact predestined to God's plan before they were ever born. Before they were born and had any chance to do any evil or good that God according to election, not works, but election would see to it that the elder would serve the younger. "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated" (Roman 9:13). That whole argument on God's predestination, sovereignty— is very strong.

But when you come to Romans 11, he's saying, "Now God hasn't cast away His people whom He foreknew"—foreknowledge a doctrine of predestination. But look down at verse five. "Even so then, at the present time also, there's a remnant according to the election of [what?] grace." Here we learn that the great doctrines of election and predestination are caused, or made possible because God is a God of grace. Grace gives to us what we don't deserve. Grace is a gift bestowed regardless of whether you proved you earned it. That's what makes it grace.

But isn't it interesting that election, predestination, God choosing us, which always seems so cold and indifferent to people. Like God just did it and didn't care, but it is all done by grace. God giving us what we don't deserve and in that is a lot of love, isn't it?

Then look at Romans 11:6. "If by grace [which it was] then it's no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace." If it's grace, it's not works. But if it be of works, then it's no more grace. It almost sounds like double-talk, but it's very clear. It's either grace or it's works. People say, "Well, you need works to prove that you really are a recipient of grace." I believe that if you've received grace under the predestination and election and choice of God, you've received grace. And God is going to see to it that the product in your life is going to be works—works that are pleasing to Him.

You see, Ephesians 2:10 said, "We are *His* workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." God's going to give you a new heart, a new man, a new nature. And "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, all things become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). So if you're truly born of God, truly elected, truly predestinated, truly chosen, then God's grace is going to see to it that you will produce what God wants in your life. That's grace.

In other words, God isn't going to leave it up to you to prove in the energy of the flesh that you somehow can be productive to His glory. He's already argued you're depraved and you can't be productive to His glory and that "all of your righteousness," says Isaiah 64:6, "is nothing but filthy rags" in His sight.

So how interesting that God, in creating us brand new, bringing us to Himself, quickening us by His Spirit, as Ephesians 2:1 says, all because of grace, now causes us to be productive. “Good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). So the reason I walk in good works, if in fact I do it, is not because of anything I came up with. It is not my brilliant determination and discipline that caused my life to do anything that would be pleasing to the Lord. It is in fact the Lord’s work in me. So it’s all of grace from beginning to end, so that I will never boast in myself but only in Him.

“He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord,” the Bible says (Galatians 6:14). You have nothing to glory about. You say, “Listen I was very disciplined. I did not murder anybody last week.” Is everybody listening? See Jesus says, “You hate in your heart you’ve already done it.” We don’t like that.

Now whether or not you are productive of good works, I don’t know. But I know in His eyes, it’s what He does in us. And it’s His grace that provides it all, that makes it all possible. I can only live for the Lord because “Christ liveth in me...the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Do you understand it’s the Lord living your life literally? He’s living His life through you and it’s all of the Lord. Whatever is good and profitable and a blessing is coming from the hand of the Lord. Grace has made it all possible. He chose you and planned all this and decided all this before you were ever born so that you and I would be to the praise of the glory of His grace. So when somebody leaks out a little glory, and we look at you and say, “Wow, he must be a Christian!” And the next day we see what you’re like and say, “Well maybe not.” Every day it’s like we’re up and down, kind of like an emotional roller coaster. One day we’re reflecting the beauty of Christ and the next day we’re looking carnal.

You see, if you ever do leak out glory, if you ever do dribble out a little bit of goodness, understand that it came from the gracious hand of God. God’s doing that through you. How easy it is to take the credit for it. How easy it is to brag about it. “Boy, God really used me. I’ll tell

you.” Really? I thought God blessed in spite of us, not because of us. For all I know a hundred other people had been witnessing like crazy and you just walked in and reaped what they’d already sown. Either way, it’s all of the Lord. It’s God’s grace that makes it all possible.

When we break down the whole doctrine of God’s grace, we realize works are not a part of it. That’s why Romans 11:6—write that out in your margin somewhere, take note of it. Grace is not works. Works is not grace. Remind yourself of that verse, Romans 11:6.

Back to Ephesians 2, the first thing that we notice almost consistently throughout Paul’s Epistles is that when he refers to either a greeting or a salutation that mentions the Lord, what word does he connect with our Lord? Grace. Isn’t that interesting? “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

So let’s call that “The Person of Grace.” It’s used ten times as you see from your notes and often at the end of the epistle. John uses it also in Revelation 22:21, “the grace of our Lord.” Let me show you that. Turn in your Bibles to John 1—The Person of Grace.

I like what one person told me one time. He said, “You don’t understand grace until you understand Jesus.” You know at the time I thought it was a simplistic remark. Everybody can come up with those trite little sayings. But the truth of that, I have come to know in my life. When you know the Lord, you know grace. Actually to try to understand the doctrine of grace apart from Jesus is an impossibility. You can’t do it. He is all grace. He’s what grace is all about.

That why John 1:14-17 is so beautiful in this regard. It says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of [What?] full of grace and truth.” John bare witness of him, and cried saying: “This was he of whom I spake; ‘He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me’”—a statement to His pre-existence. From a physical point of view, John was six months older than Jesus. And watch this: “And out of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

Now if you take that little verse, grace for grace, and you open up various commentators on that subject, you're going to see a lot of interpretation. What does He mean, grace for grace? Some take it to mean grace upon grace. That is, He keeps piling it on. And that's a great thing because He has daily loaded us with benefits. He is a gracious God. He blesses us all the time.

Another way to look at it is that when the grace that He gave you for any particular event, circumstance, work, or whatever...however He sustained you in whatever moment, that grace has behind it an inexhaustible supply. So you say, "Yeah, the Lord touched me with His grace in a wonderful way. He just gave me what I didn't really deserve." I just want you to know that He only touched you. He's got a gigantic, infinite, inexhaustible supply of grace behind it. There's more coming because of who He is.

Do you know our God wants to give you grace more than you want to receive it? Grace gives you what you don't deserve. He's constantly giving you what you don't deserve. And you don't even see it. And that grace upon grace, to me, carries the idea that God's inexhaustible supply is always there and whatever grace I just received isn't all there is.

Match that with Ephesians 2:7, "That in the ages to come, he will show you the exceeding wealth of his grace in his kindness to you in Christ." We haven't yet begun to see the riches of his grace. I saw it when I got saved and the longer I study it, the more it thrills my heart. But I haven't begun, neither have you, to see the riches of the grace of our Lord. He's going to keep showing it to you all the way through eternity. Imagine knowing a God like that!

Wouldn't it be a bummer to get to heaven and realize that everything you ever learned about God is all there is to know. There's nothing else, that's all there is—a dead end street. Wouldn't that be awful? But according to the Bible, we will never know all there is to know about Him. "His ways are past finding out" (Romans 11:33). But one thing He delights to do is show you His grace.

I love to look people in the eye, as I did a family that was torn apart yesterday. Miserable, messed up, terrible problems—girl rebelling. It was like hell on earth. I didn't want to hear any

more hostility. And that young teenage girl, I walked over and I said, “You know something? It astounds me how little you know about God’s love. That’s all it took. She just broke down. I said, “I don’t know what you’re fighting. I don’t know what you’re upset about. I don’t know why you’re so hostile. I just want you to know, God loves you. God is a God of grace. He wants to bless you. He wants to give you what you don’t deserve. But He loves doing it so you’ll turn around and praise Him. He loves to be praised. He loves to be thanked.” By the way, so do you! Just don’t take the credit, it belongs to God.

So I kind of put this package together, the scope of His grace. He’s full of grace. Luke 2:40, even as He was growing up, says that “the grace of God was upon Him.” Imagine just looking at a young man growing up and saying, “God’s grace is on that boy.”

Now here it says He’s going to give grace in the stead of grace. That’s why I said I think it’s referring to His inexhaustible supply that in the place of what you receive, that you think that’s all there is. Are you kidding? God is going to put more grace there than you’ve ever seen. I have seen God’s grace in very difficult circumstances. He is a God of grace.

And the source of grace, He told us grace came by Jesus Christ. Flip over to 1 Corinthians 1 and look at verses four and five. I like this. “I thank my God always on your behalf.” Why? Because you’re just terrific, talented people that have the ability to do marvelous exploits for God. Is that what it says? No. It says, “I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ” Now look at this next statement, “...that in everything you are enriched by Him.”

Now if your self-esteem is just swaggering a bit today. You don’t feel like you’re worth anything, and maybe some other people or circumstances made you believe that. You just go memorize this: “Enriched by Him in everything.” You believe that?

There’s an old song that I really like. Not very contemporary in melody, but it has a great message. And the chorus says,

His love has no limit. His grace has no measure.

His power has no boundaries known unto man.

But out of His riches He giveth and giveth again.

That's true isn't it? The name of the song is "He Giveth More Grace."

Or,

Marvelous Grace of Our Loving Lord.

Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

Yonder on Calvary's Mount outpoured there

Where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God's grace.

Grace that will pardon and cleanse within.

Grace, grace, God's grace.

Grace that is greater than all of my sin.

That's good, isn't it? And who can forget Isaac Newton.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind but now I see.

Isn't God's grace a wonderful thing? It is true, isn't it? We have a wonderful gospel.

We're sorry for all the people that mess it up by the way they live, but we've got a wonderful gospel. We're sorry for how people twist this thing all the time and mess it up. But boy, if you just take it for what it is in the Bible, it is really wonderful! God saves by grace. He gives you what you don't deserve.

It's the Person of grace that helps us to understand grace. And all grace comes from Him and through Him.

Now what's the purpose of grace? I hope this will bless you. It sure has blessed me. "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and [what?] grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). Wait a minute! I wasn't in existence, but it was given to me before the world began.

I said this one time and made people upset, but I believe it. I believe that God had you and everything about you in His mind before He ever created the world. That's kind of a neat thought, isn't it? Yeah, I didn't come around 'til the 20th century, but God had me in His mind before the world was ever created.

Titus 2:11-13. You know what really hit me when I went to Titus 2? That even in the struggle that you and I have to live a godly life...and let's be honest, it's a struggle. It's a hard thing. It's difficult. It's not easy to live for the Lord. And there's so much trouble out there. And you know it's not just out there. It's in your own heart. And it just really hit me that God's grace, which provides everything, also provides you and me the ability to live for the Lord.

Titus 2:11. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us..." Grace teaches us. What does grace that God gives you what you don't deserve, what does it teach you? "That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It hit me very strongly, because remember the family I was talking to you about?—the girl, how she broke down. That all they were doing is becoming more legalistic. As she rebels, they put down the clamps. She rebels more, they put down more clamps. Rebel more, more restrictions, rebel more, more restrictions. And I'm not against parental discipline, obviously. I'm just saying at some point, you've got to realize that if the convictions of your child are not their convictions and not yours, it's not going to do any good to keep putting these clamps down. It's not doing any good at all.

Paul said, "When the law came, I just coveted all the more." I learned that early. I told my son, my first son, when he was just a little guy, "Don't put your hand in the fire. You'll get

burned.” And I walked out of the kitchen. Something just told me to go back and take another look. I went back and looked in it. He was looking around to see if anybody was there and stuck his hand right in the fire. Owh! Of course, he wants sympathy. Now, you understand?

The law came. Don't put your hand in that fire! And the old sin nature starts saying, “I don't know...I'm going to find out for myself.” Wheewh!

God is a wonderful God. He wants to bless you more than you want to receive it. But see, people don't understand that. And so when they read Titus 2, “They got legalism! Oh yeah, life of self-denial again. Big discipline trip.” No, it says, “The grace of God will teach you.”

In other words, the more you learn about God's grace, and His love, and His mercy, the greater will be your response to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. For me to tell you, “Stay away from the stuff. You're going to ruin your life.” You're going to sit there and say, “I don't care what he says. I'm going to do what I want to do.” But when the Holy Spirit begins to work on you and God's wonderful grace pours into your life and you begin to see that God wants to bless you more than you ever wanted to receive. All of a sudden His standards and His commandments, as John says, “are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). They're not a heavy burden at all any more because they're all designed to protect you and bless you. Isn't that neat? That's God's grace even in the matter of separation from sin.

Now turn back to Ephesians again, chapter two. Now when we read this little short paragraph of ten verses, many of you of course if you've known the Lord for very long, have already memorized verse eight. “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” It's a wonderful verse.

There's a problem however. There's a disagreement among Christians about this verse and if you want to indicate it, then circle or write out in your notes—the word “that.” In verse eight, the word that is the key word, “For by grace are you saved through faith and THAT is not of yourself. It is the gift of God.” What do people normally say “that” is referring to? Anyone?

Faith! So they say that faith is a gift of God. Now by the way, there is a spiritual gift of faith. But the faith to believe in Christ is not something He gives you. That's your faith in Him.

You say, "Wait a minute. It says 'it's a gift of God not of works.'" Well, the problem is "that." That is a demonstrative pronoun. A pronoun has to agree in gender and number with the word it modifies. It does not modify faith grammatically. What we have is a clause or short phrase to begin the verse that's translated in English, "by grace are you saved." We would say perhaps and try to unfold the Greek a little bit more – "having been saved by grace." In other words, it's salvation by grace. And that participial form agrees in gender and number with "that." So the "that" is referring to salvation by grace. And that now makes sense because the word gift, of course, is rooted in the word grace as well.

Salvation by grace is the gift of God and not of yourself. Faith is confidence and trust in what the Bible says about this and you believe on the basis of it (the Bible). A lot of people think and they come from denominational and theological groups, who in fact, believe the opposite. And it's always amazing to me, you know, if you just let the Bible talk to you. I don't have to make up anything. It isn't an interpretation, it's a problem of grammar. I have no choice in the matter. 'That' refers to salvation by grace, not faith. Now, maybe you could continue to believe that God gives you the faith to believe. But what actually happens is people begin to trust their ability to believe something.

Let me put it to you another way. Faith does not save you. It never has. Jesus Christ saves you. And people get mixed up all the time. So the reason they are struggling in believing in the Lord is they think they have to have enough faith to believe it. Like somehow it's their ability to believe that makes it so. Oh no! Whether you believe it or not, it still is so. He still died on the cross for our sins. He still rose again from the dead. And if you're struggling with it, I want you to know that your struggle has nothing to do with whether it's true or not. It's not your ability to believe it.

Faith isn't whistling in the dark, or hoping something is so, when you're not sure it is. Turn over to Hebrews 11 just for a quick moment; verse one, "Faith is the substance [the foundation, the ground] of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Imagine if that was just your faith. You'd live in depression most of the time.

Verse three says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by [what?] the word of God." Oh, here we have an explanation because it says, "the things that are seen were not made of things that do appear." So here we've got creation out of nothing. So how are you going to believe that? The only way you're going to believe it is by believing that when the Bible said that, the Bible is true. You say, "Well, I wasn't there." It doesn't make any difference. "Well I've never really seen how that operates in the physical universe." It doesn't make any difference. God's asking you to believe what the Book says.

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." You see, your faith is merely a channel. Or, as an African pastor friend of mine says, "The hand of the heart that simply reaches out and takes what God says and believes it." But your faith doesn't save you.

When you sit down in a chair, you are entrusting yourself to the thing you say you believe in, the chair, to hold you up. Most of us when offered a chair to sit down, we don't get under the chair to see if the legs will hold us up. We don't check it and you know, work it over and so forth. And some of them do fall and when you're my size it's a question. Okay. But do you understand me? You don't check the chair. Why? You entrust yourself to the thing you say you believe in. What holds you up? Your faith? No, the chair! In the illustration, Jesus is the chair.

So please understand that when we talk about grace providing salvation and He says "by grace we are saved" is that which is a gift of God. All that causes you and me to be saved is all the product of God's grace. It has nothing to do with anything you ever did.

Thank you Lord for bringing us to Yourself, for making us Your children. And as we continue to study these great doctrines, may we have a heart that truly desires to worship You. And we thank You in Jesus' name, amen.