



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Power of Grace

February 17, 2019

Romans 1:5-7 (1-7)

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1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Pastor prays)

John Wesley, the great Evangelist and father of the Methodist Church, was first an Anglican priest and missionary that came to the American South to teach the gospel. But soon into his missionary service he realized, although he was a priest in the church and living as a missionary, he had not actually understood grace. That is until he came face to face with it in the book of Romans and his heart was strangely warmed by the invading, flooding, power of the grace of God in Christ.

No gospel is complete that doesn't explain and point to the exploding joy of forgiveness found in Christ alone. The word grace is used over 155 times the New Testament and over 100 up those times it is used by Paul, 24 times right here in the book of Romans. In fact, John Piper says you can't understand the book of Romans if you don't get grace. Grace is the heart of Romans and the soul of Christianity. And there is not a role you take in life that can be lived out properly and adequately apart from the enabling grace of God, found only in Christ.

Grace is the free gift that causes joy and it is the point of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and it changes us from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ. It's what we pray for our lost friends and wayward children, that they may receive the free gift of joyful forgiveness called grace. When John Newton wrote the hymn, Amazing Grace, he did so because he had been a foul mouthed, fornicating slave trader and God saved him through Jesus. And he thought that God's grace truly was amazing. And it's what Paul writes about in this passage.

It begins at the end of verse 4 with the phrase, Jesus Christ our Lord, and ends in verse 7 with the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the middle is grace. Saving, calling, sustaining, in enabling, forgiving grace. True Christianity is a religion of grace and if you don't get grace don't get being a Christian. And this passage is packed full of grace and it is such good news for all of us here.

Grace Though Jesus is the Only Hope We Have and All the Religion We Need

Let's take a look at the remarkable, colorful way Paul describes saving grace in this passage and rejoice.

Because of Grace, I have Sure Footing

Let's start back at the end of Verse 4 and come forward. *Jesus Christ, Our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship.* Although he uses "we", he's talking about himself. There are 2 things here in verse 5 that he received, grace and apostleship. He was saved by grace and then he was sent, apostleship.

Looking at this verse, John MacArthur said, "the Lord never provides conversion without commission." Isn't that what Ephesians 2:10 means, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* But we must be sure to get the order right. The grace that saves must come before the grace to serve. God's grace in Jesus saves us first and then sends us after. Jesus says, "come to me" before he says "go into all the world." Commitment to the truth comes before commitment to the task. In Isaiah 6, Isaiah is convicted and converted before he can actually hear the words "who will go for us?" Before he could say, "here I am, send me", he had to say, "here I am save me." And I wonder how many people in this church have tried to do good without actually knowing God. And let me tell you what you already know, religion without grace is boring, pointless and dead. It is drudgery. And if church and religion seem boring and pointless and dead to you, I'm asking you to consider whether or not you actually understand grace - the free,

saving, forgiving grace of God through Jesus. Grace that is found at the cross of Jesus. Because of grace, I have sure footing.

Because of Grace, I have an Active Faith

Look at verse 5 and listen to how Paul described reaching the nations and more specifically what their Christianity should look like. *5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith* What a great phrase to describe becoming a Christian. You might even say the obedience that comes from faith. See, there is an inherent dynamism to the gospel. It's not static. It creates and generates and moves and motivates and changes us. It's why James would say faith without works is dead. Trying obedience without faith is dead religion and faith without obedience is straight hypocrisy.

True faith is verified and bona fide by obedience. It is delusional to believe that you can go from death to life and there not be a desire and longing to honor God. That might be a faith in God, but it is not a saving grace in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Some have said that the greatest mission field is the church itself where people have been inoculated with just enough gospel keep you from getting the whole thing. Jonathon Edwards called it a kind of anti-gospel vaccination that makes people feel secure as they walk across the pit of hell on a rotten bridge.

A saving faith is a seen faith, a faith that is granite under your feet and oxygen in your lungs. It's a faith that caused Job to say, "though he slay me, yet I will praise him." You say you have faith and I pray it's true! Has obedience followed it? Is there evidence that Jesus is your Lord? Because of grace I have sure footing. Because of grace I have an active faith.

Because of Grace, I Have a Clear Purpose

You can see the purpose embedded there in verse 5. Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among the gentiles - nations. For the sake of his name. Here is a beautiful umbrella phrase of our life and work. We do so, for the sake of the name of Jesus.

It's why you stay in a job you hate or a marriage you don't understand. It's for the glory of God in Jesus. In fact this phrase becomes the driving engine behind the tough things. Paul will explain in Chapter 9, Romans 9:17 says, *17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be*

proclaimed in all the earth.” For the sake of his name it's why we are saved by grace and not by works, so he gets the glory and not us.

Here is the underlying motivation for life and ministry. It's why we sacrificed for our children and love the unlovable people and our patience in affliction and why we praise him in tragedy; For the sake of his name. Surely that's what Paul had in mind in Colossians 3: 23-24, ²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,* ²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.* You are serving the Lord Christ. Because of grace I have a clear purpose.

Because of Grace, I Have Real Security

There is a truckload of terms left in this passage that would be worth looking at, but there are 3 that have caught my attention this week. And if you deal with anxiety or worry or really low self-esteem, I want you to hear these words and claim them in the name of Jesus for yourself.

The first word is called. Called to belong to Jesus Christ in verse 6 and called to be Saints in verse 7. That is what makes us Christians and how Paul describes conversion through the New Testament. The Greek word is ἐκκλησία, the church, the called-out ones. It's God doing the calling.

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 1:9. ⁹ *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Yet not only that, God's call to Christ is powerful and effective. It is a command. Let's look at creation and what is commanded.

In Genesis 1, when God said let there be light, there was light. Or when Jesus stood at Lazarus grave and commanded, Lazarus, come forth. If he hadn't used Lazarus' name, every dead body would have gotten up and come out. There is great security and contentment and joy and hope in knowing that he called you.

The next word is love. Verse 7 says to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called; to be saved and converted. To be a Christian is to be loved by God in the strong covenant love that emanates from the cross. This is a special love he reserves for his people in Christ. Read Romans 8 where Paul ask, “who can separate us from the love of God in Christ.” Or read in John 10 when Jesus says, “no one will snatch them out of my hand.” To be loved by God in the safety of Jesus is the most secure place you will ever be.

The last word I will point out in this passage is saint. Verse 7 says loved by God and called to be saints. It's from the Greek word ἅγιοις, to be holy or to be set apart. It goes like this, as a sinner separated from God, deemed to be punished, you hear the gospel, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who died for sinners. You believe. Then the great exchange happens, he became sin who knew no sin that in him we might become the righteousness of God. It is an exchange that makes us saints. It is the most free, gratifying, soul cleansing name you will ever receive and it's found only at the cross of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)