

Glorious Grace

Ephesians

Last week we looked at the start of the book of Ephesians. We have spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. The first of those was our adoption as children of God.

The second is the nature of 'glorious grace' that is ours.

Ephesians 1:6-8

6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.[a] 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 2:4-7

4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

'glorious grace'

Bruce says 'he has "be-graced" them, Peterson says 'he wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son', grace is a lavish gift giving, it is permanent Christmas.

The calling out of destiny, the choosing out of love, the adoption of sons all speaks of a loving lavish Father, it causes us to celebrate the extravagant nature of God (his glory), a reservoir of mercy and love (grace).. When we talk about grace we are talking about a river of love cascading from the heavenly paces.

Grace is glory filled and glory fuelled because grace, the mercy love mixture is a divine product of heavenly nature.

Rich in Grace

The Grace of God is described as part of the lavish riches of heaven (Paul refers to riches 6 times in Eph 1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16) . These spiritual blessings have life changing dimensions. Bruce translates this as 'wealth of grace'. It is this grace that 'makes us acceptable', it is this act of love that embraces us in the arms of his grace (Ro 3:24; 5:15).

Grace is described as rich (1:7; 2:4,7), the very currency of heaven is cashed on earth as grace. In the same way we earn £, which are stored as a note of promise, so it is that grace is like the currency of the heavenly bank, and we get to cash it on earth, a promise made real in our lives.

Grace Outpouring

“grace poured out on us” (1:6) and “showered his kindness on us” (1:8) reflects the pouring out of something wonderful into our lives.

'lavished on us' means over and over again or some translations say 'abound'. This was no once off event, no the effects of this love-overflow was continual. In the same way that we are to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, so we are to experience the overflow of the lavish grace of God.

This overflow is not just about experience, it is to give us 'wisdom and prudence' or insight/ understanding. Getting to grips with the nature of spiritual things requires us to have some degree of spiritual understanding. The wisdom that is talked about is introducing us to the idea of the insight into the divine plan of God (sophia cf. v. 17; 3:10; Col. 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5), the understanding (phronēsei) is about how God makes that plan happen or as Peterson says 'letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making'

But lets now overlook or marginalise the experience of grace. You can theorise the 'theology of grace' all you like but until you can sing the song of a slave trader set free in 'amazing grace' you will never truly know what grace is.

Grace is a lavish outpouring on undeserving people. I may try to link the grace of God to my holiness, my good life, my clean living, but the essence of grace is totally unrefined undiluted love to someone who doesn't deserve it. There are no buts... have some more outpouring of the love of God!

Freedom, Forgiveness and Life

Grace has an affect, that degree of pure love is going to mess with your life, if you experience the liquid gold of the heaven's currency in your life then something is going to shift in you...

'purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son' (1:7)

Redemption (the real word) was to buy it back, a deliverance from something, in our case a deliverance from a state of slavery. If a man became a slave the OT allowed for him to be bought out of slavery by a brother (Le 25:48), so Jesus becomes our brother to redeem us (Mt 20:28). The blood payment was built into the Hebraic sacrificial system to pay for our deliverance, Jesus paid the price that divine justice demanded (Ac 20:28; Ro 3:25; 1Co 6:20; Col 1:20; 1Pe 1:18, 19), He died in our place for our sin (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:22).

Here we see the use of the currency of heaven, it makes the payment to make us free! Jn 8:36, real freedom.

'forgave our sin' (1:7)

forgiveness means literally a 'sending away'.

“On the Day of Atonement there were two scapegoats involved in the yearly ritual of Lev. 16, one was sent away, symbolically carrying away Israel’s sins (cf. Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 44:22; Jer. 31:44; and Micah 7:14); the other was sacrificed, symbolizing the fact that sin costs a life. Jesus took fallen mankind’s sin away by dying in their place (cf. Col. 1:14) thus combining the two meanings” [Utley].

‘he gave us life when he raised Jesus from the dead’ (2:5)

This grace currency gives us a supernatural life, an overflowing abundant life that is totally different from anything else that can experience.

Life that bubbles up from a spring on the inside (Jn 4:14), a life that you can live to the full (Jn 10:10). When this gold rush comes to your life, the whole landscape changes. We begin to see through the counterfeit pleasures because we are showered with all ‘wisdom and understanding’ (1:8). The needle, the bottle, the bed all take on a different perspective. My angry nature, my lustful eyes, my gossiping tongue no longer lock me down, because the stream of grace gold in my life changes all that.

The emphasis is not on me reaching heaven but on heaven reaching me, the focus is not on my separation from God but God’s connection with me, it’s not my wants but on His desire. Something so switches round in me that sees things with the security of heaven’s perspective. Real living... that’s resurrection life!

Saved by Grace

‘its only by grace that you have been saved’ (2:5)

It’s His idea, His action, His masterplan. The gospel is a message about the eternal plan of God to bring salvation to us. Nothing I do can contribute to the perfection of the plan, change the plan or make it better than it already is, I just get to say yes!

My part in the complete ‘sozo’ of my life is to believe that it can happen, is happening and has happened... that’s faith! Being sozoed by grace is the way it works. I get the unfolding nature of this revelation so much that I get changed in the process.

When we get some healing in our lives we are allowing the currency of heaven to buy back another part of our lives, so piece by piece we are sucked into the reality of our status as children of the living God.

Seated in Heaven by Grace

‘seated with Him in the heavenly realms’ (2:6)

This is a statement of reality. The text writes it as if it had actually happened rather than thinking that it will happen. It is a statement of the actual purpose of God for us, our ‘true home is where Christ is’ (Bruce), our citizenship is in heaven (Phil3:20) the community that we belong to although active on earth is ‘heavenly in origin, character and destiny’.

Although one of my daughters is temporarily at University she has her bed at home!

Grace positions us, destines us for heaven and joins us to Jesus in a trinity like way. Being 'united with Christ' (2:6; 7) is part of the consequence of the grace flow, we get to participate in the heavenly activity in a totally different way. Grace enables us to become joined up inside and joined up with Jesus. We get to become whole in every way and benefit in how Jesus is

Example of Grace

'so God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace' (2:7)

God the Father is using us as an example of the wonderful nature of Grace. When we tell our stories, they are stories of grace, they declare it happened for me it can happen for you!

What about some more examples of Grace in our lives, and so be a conduit to see Him make some more examples in others.

Living lives of grace on the inside and letting it flow out!