

The Magnificence of God's Grace

By Peter Nortier

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 2:7-10

Preached on: Thursday, April 6, 2006

Mercies of God Association

1553 Knapp Street NE.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/merciesofgod

And tonight, the caboose is going to be pushed by the engine. I am the caboose and brother Williams is the engine. And last time I followed him and tonight he is going to push me.

So take your Bibles, if you would, and turn to the book of Ephesians, Ephesians chapter two. And I want you to notice with me. I am going to read the entire chapter, but our text will primarily be in verses eight through 10 as tonight, for a few moments, I am going to bring you a subject on the magnificence of God's grace.

Ephesians chapter two. Let's go down to verse seven through 10.

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.¹

Let's bow for prayer.

Our Lord, tonight thou dost know the seriousness of the hour, the depravity of the human heart, the opposition of the evil one as well as the inability of the human vessel. And so, our God, we ask especially, meet with us tonight in a special manner. Lord, all you need to do is speak the Word and there comes an awakening. And you know how we have been praying for that for years. And, oh, our God, how we need it. We need it in and amongst thy people and we need it across this country. And so, our God, we pray. Work out thy purpose here as only thou art able as we know you will. How glad we are that thou art a sovereign God and that, Lord, there is no surprises, no crisis, no happenstance with thee, but you work all things after the counsel of your will. And as we have been studying this morning in the morning, Lord, we find out that you drew up that counsel back yonder in eternity. What a privilege to be a part of it and to see thee work these things out. Now direct us tonight and, Lord, we believe there is some here tonight that don't know you. Open their eyes. Deal with them, Lord. Don't let them leave until they get converted. And

¹ Ephesians 2:7-10.

how glad we are that the hour has come and it is still is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And, Lord, cause that to happen this evening. We ask it, Lord Jesus, for thy sake. Amen.

Tonight we are going to look at the grace of God and be made to marvel at its magnificence. One can never get over the tremendous privilege given to the individual when God saves that person. The reason for the lack of appreciation on the part of many so-called Christians, is that the majority of them have never had the work of God wrought in their souls. As I have said before, I will say again. Ninety-five percent of our Baptists in the churches today need a conversion experience. We have a church load full of unsaved individuals and that is why all these cults and everything are going in full gun, as it were. This we find that the majority of the people have never come to know Christ. And I want to say it very kindly. This has come about and I blame the churches on it. The churches today are not preaching the truth. They are preaching a truth. They are not preaching the Lord Jesus. They are preaching a Jesus. And people today don't know the difference. And I will tell you right now. I wouldn't be in the shoes of some of these preachers for anything.

When you stop to realize, brethren, that you and I are going to meet our converts at the judgment bar of God, we had better make dead sure that we teach them the truth.

Now our subject tonight will be the magnificence of grace.

If I were to ask you tonight: Give me a definition of grace that is true to you, some of you could. But I am going to give you three definitions and then we are going to look at not only the magnificence of grace—or I should say the meaning of grace—then we are going to look at the mystery of grace.

Now grace is something that you and I can't see. We can't grab hold of it. But I am getting ahead of myself and I want you to notice, first of all, the meaning of the term grace.

Let me give you a simple one that you teenagers could remember very easily. What is it? G R A C E. God's redemption at Christ's expense. And that is a pretty good definition.

But if any of you [?] have a book given by the name of *The Doctrines of Grace* by George Sales Bishop, I will tell you right now. He has got, as far as I am concerned, he has got the best meaning that there is with regard to grace. Listen to what it says.

“We see very clearly grace is a provision of God for men so fallen they cannot lift the axe of justice, so corrupt they cannot change their own nature, so averse to God they cannot turn to him, so blind they cannot see him, so deaf they cannot hear him and so dead that God himself must open their graves and lift them into resurrection.”

Now, beloved, isn't that something? That is grace.

Now I am going to give you one that the Lord has given me. Grace is the optional attribute of God bestowed upon the unworthy and irresistibly accomplishing its purpose with regard to its design, thus, controlling every aspect and circumstance which affects the life of the individual.

Now you listen... you chew on that for just a moment if you will. Now this is the meaning of the term grace. And always remember one thing. Grace is the optional attribute of God. Grace is like the salt that is found across the world. Believers are likened to be the salt of the earth. But I will tell you right now. The best salt is found around the Dead Sea. Did you know that? That is the best salt there is and that doesn't surprise me. But salt is the creation of God.

I know we have false salt today, but it doesn't add up to the real thing, no more than we have a false grace today. And I will tell you right now. In the light of true grace it pales into insignificance, doesn't it?

And the grace of God is a magnificent grace.

Now how does it work? Well, grace is a mystery. First of all, let me ask you. Keep your fingers on Ephesians two and go back with me to two passages of Scripture. The first one is found in Acts chapter 14 and look with me at verse 27. And I want you to notice here. It ties in with the definition that I gave you that grace is God's optional attribute.

In Acts chapter 14 and verse 27 we read, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."²

Now I like that. In other words, there was a time when God didn't open the door of faith to the Gentiles. I am glad he changed, aren't you? Because you and I wouldn't be saved if he hadn't. But he not only opened the door to the Gentiles, but now turn, if you will, to Acts chapter 18 and look with me at verse 27 and you will see another verse of Scripture that I like to set forth and we find very clearly it ties in with our lesson tonight.

Acts chapter 18 and verse 27. And it is speaking here of the apostle and this is what he says.

"And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace."³

Now get this. God opened the door of faith, but you and I can't be saved until we believe through grace. So, therefore, grace is an imperative. And to understand grace and we find in our subject tonight is the doctrine of God's... or the magnificence of God's

² Acts 14:27.

³ Acts 18:27.

irresistible grace, I want to give you simply and quickly, but if I may, five simple things with regard to the mystery of God's grace.

Now, first of all, we find—and go back to our text, if you will: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.⁴

Now why do we tell you this? I like that word, “For by grace are ye saved through faith.”⁵

All right. Let's stop right here. Are you saved tonight? Not are you a church member, not are you a moral person, not have you been baptized, not have you joined, not have you spoken in tongues or not have you turned over a new leaf. But I want to ask you a question. Have you been genuinely converted?

You see, you can be just as religious as possible and die and go to hell. I know what I am talking about. I have been there. I have been on both sides of the fence. I know what it is to live in the depravity of sin as an old sinner. I had no use for God in World War II. And when if anybody would have told me when I was in World War II that I would ever become a Baptist preacher, I probably would have killed him, because I had no use for God whatever.

And I used to sing that song, “We are poor lost sheep, condemned to hell,” as we got drunk.

But, you know, God had a plan for this old sinner's life and then what happened was this. Under the guise of religion I became very religious. I pastored three Baptist churches, emptied more than one of them in a revival meeting and I wasn't converted.

This old Baptist preacher pastored three Baptist churches and I will tell you right now. I had never stood before God as a lost sinner until the year 1960. And I will never forget that as long as I live. It was the grace of God that this is what it is. Here is the mystery of it. The grace of God is inscrutable.

“What are you talking about, preacher?”

The Lord God of heaven chooses the most unlikely to be saved.

My relatives made this statement. They said, “Pete is having too good a time and he is going to go to hell laughing, but he is going to wind up in hell because he is having such a good time.”

And for years I could take you back where I used to live and if you ever told them that Peter Nortier had become a Baptist preacher this is what they would have said.

⁴ Ephesians 2:8-9.

⁵ Ephesians 2:8.

“Him? Not him. No, anybody but him.”

Well, now grace is inscrutable. And while the inscrutability of grace it means this. He doesn't come to you and say to you very kindly, say to you these words, “You would make me so happy if you would let me save you.”

No, sir. No, sir. What does he do? Suddenly, mysteriously, positively and absolutely and indelibly he moves upon that individual heart and the grace of God grips hold of that person and I will tell you right now, something begins to take place. They become as miserable as they can possibly be. They try every way they can to get out of it. And we find God does what? He shuts them up in a corner and I will tell you right now. They can't go forward. They can't go backward. They can't go up or they can't go down. God shuts him a corner until he is through with him and when he is through with him he brings him forth to the glory of God and to their eternal salvation.

Now, beloved, that is grace. And grace is inscrutable because what does it do? We find very clearly it chooses the most unlikely to be saved and this is why our so-called modern day evangelism is such a heresy, because only God knows who are going to be saved. And only God knows when they are going to be saved. And only God knows how they are going to be saved. And only God knows the individual that is going to be involved in their salvation.

Usually it is some kind of a preacher. It may be a high powered preacher. It might be an ordinary preacher like myself, a poor preacher. But God in his infinite mercy, what does he do? He has put that marvelous reality and we are nothing but chosen vessels. He has put that beautiful reality of grace in our hearts and we are chosen vessels and those of us that he has called to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus and to preach his Word, I will tell you right now. We just don't know who God is going to save. But we are to preach the truth and set it forth. And then if you want to close with an invitation let me urge you to do this.

Sing the song:

Pass me not oh blessed Savior,
Hear my humble cry.
While on others thou art calling,
Oh, please, don't pass me by.

Now the grace of God is inscrutable.

I am going to ask you a question. Do you know what I am talking about? Has God ever brought you to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ so that you could say from the depths of your soul, “Yes, preacher, by grace I have been saved and it is a gift of God, not of works, lest I could boast, because I had nothing to brag about. I am still amazed and astounded over the fact that God saved me.”

And I will tell you right now. You never get over it. The longer I serve the Lord Jesus, the sweeter he becomes.

I hope you are in that category tonight. But I want you to notice a second thing about grace. Grace does this. Grace is invisible.

You say, "Preacher, what in the world are you talking about?"

It can't be seen. It can't be held. It can't be learned. It has got to be experienced.

John chapter three and verse eight, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."⁶

"What are you talking about, preacher?"

Well, reach out and give me a hand full of grace. Reach out and give me a hand full of gravity. Reach out and give me a hand full of electricity. Well, grace is invisible.

As I said before, it can't be learned. It can't be inherited. It has got to be experienced. And it is by grace we are saved through faith. It is the grace of God that brings the faith in our soul and we find very clearly. We see it cannot be seen. It cannot be held. It cannot be learned. It has got to be experienced.

And are you listening? The grace of God comes when the individual least expects it.

Now chew on that, if you will.

It is invisible, but are you listening? While it is invisible, it is as real as it can be to the individual who has ever been saved by grace. We are going through hard times like someone said. We are either coming out of a storm or we are going into a storm. Well, it is... the Lord God of heaven has told us this. With by much tribulation we are going to enter into the kingdom of God and unto us it is not only given to believe on him, but also to suffer.

Now here in America we don't suffer at the present time. If it keeps on like we will, like it is, we are going to. We may die a martyr's death. We don't know. But I will tell you right now. There is something that when God brings his calamity upon us, there is something in the individual that causes that individual to do what? To stand. To look to the Lord God of heaven and not to cry. Not to... or should I say, not to be overwhelmed with such an emotional sorrow that they don't know what they are doing. That is... a believer doesn't act that way very often.

⁶ John 3:8.

But I will tell you what it does. When that believer is going through a hard time, he turns and he asks God to give him grace.

Now I stand before you here tonight and I was convicted a number of years ago in the state of Michigan of negligent homicide. I drove a school bus for 13 years. And I got in a wreck with a motorcycle. And the motorcyclist died. And they charged me with negligent homicide and I was found guilty and I was to be sentenced to two years in prison and also a 2000 dollar fine.

And I will tell you right now. You talk about a traumatic experience. That is one. And I will never forget the day I stood before that judge. And he was known as a hanging judge. Three cases ahead of me he gave them the absolute limit. He couldn't give them any more. He came to my case. I stood there before him and I was ready and willing and able to go to jail.

Now this may sound strange to you, but I actually dreamed about going into prison. God made me willing to go. And even in the night when I was asleep and my wife would be asleep and I would be tossing and turning, I would be dreaming and I will tell you right now. I could see myself walking through that prison gate. And this is what they would say.

“Ah, here comes that Baptist preacher. Preacher, preacher, preach to us.”

And I probably said it out loud. I said, “Yes, and you are going to die and go to hell except you repent.”

But, you know, I stood before that judge. The courtroom was packed. And the judge made this statement. He said, “Incarceration is for the purpose of rehabilitation But,” he said, “this man doesn't have to be rehabilitated.” He said, “This has been a tragic accident.” And he said, “My sentence is this. Two hundred dollar fine, two hundred dollar court costs, three months probation in which you cannot drive your automobile from one o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the morning unless it is church business.”

Now have you ever heard a sentence like that? But I am going to tell you why. The judge had to sentence me. The law shows no mercy. The law has no compunction. The law says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”⁷ And if you break the law you are going to suffer it.

But are you listening? The grace of God is invisible.... or I should say the grace of God is not inscrutable, but it is also invincible.

Now why do I tell you this? All through that traumatic time God supported me. And people said afterwards, they said, “Pastor,” they said, “Since you had that episode with the bus and everything like that, you have become a whole lot better preacher.”

⁷ Ezekiel 18:4, 20.

And when I was told that by several people I just bowed my head and said, "Lord, thank you."

You see, when we get into problems we don't necessarily ask the Lord to get rid of it. We just say, "Lord, keep us faithful and bring us through it."

And when fiery trials will come across our pathway, what is the purpose of it? We find very clearly the Lord says... when fiery trials come across your pathway, he said these words. He said, "They will not overtake you. You will not be burned. I only desire to do what? Burn of the dross and refine the gold."

Now grace, grace is behind that. And we find the grace of God is inscrutable, it is invincible, it cannot be described but it is a reality to every recipient. And that is the reason I ask you tonight. Do you know Christ? Is the Lord Jesus real to you? If you don't know for sure, let me urge you to do this. Go home tonight. Stand in front of your mirror. Call yourself by name and ask yourself this question. Do you really know the Lord Jesus Christ? And see what your heart answers.

In other words, get on honest before God and you are going to have to if you ever get converted.

Now the grace of God is inscrutable. The grace of God is also invisible. And then we find the grace of God is irresistible.

Now Paige Patterson made a statement that he didn't believe in irresistible grace. Well, he just doesn't know what we is talking about because the grace of God is irresistible.

"What are you talking about?"

It is like the wind. You can't stop the wind. Go to your TV tonight and look what happened with these tornadoes. All right. Are you listening? When God sets out to save that individual you can rest assured of one thing. They are going to come because when he hath begun a good work in you, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And God's grace is absolutely invisible. It is inscrutable. It is invisible. And then we find very clearly it is infallible.

What does he do? He takes a good for nothing, stinking, hell deserving, hell bound, hell bent sinner and turns that individual into a heaven bound saint of God.

Do you know what I am talking about? Have you ever stood before God as a guilty hell bent sinner, hell deserving?

Oh, people don't like to hear about hell today, but I will tell you right now. Hell is hot. It is eternal. And it is reserved for every individual outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hallelujah, brother, I am not going there.

I have had people tell me, “You are nothing but an old fool. Go to hell.”

Do you know how I answer them? I can’t.

Are you still with me? All right.

Now look at this. We find the grace of God is irresistible. It takes a rebellious, hell bound sinner, turns him into a heaven bound saint and we find 1 Peter brings that out. He said very clearly, “We at one time, we walked in darkness and now we are what? We are now the children of God. At one time we were not the children of God.”

And then we find the fourth thing about grace is this. It is infallible in its application.

“What are you talking about?”

Well, people have said over and over again, “Peter Nortier being a Baptist preacher? No way.”

Well, God knows better.

If God saved you tonight I am going to tell you right now, he saved you for the glory of his grace. And he has got a purpose for you and that purpose is for you to serve him. Not everybody is called to be a preacher.

When I went to the Moody Bible Institute and I found out your pastor did at one time, too. I went there and the man told gave me this illustration about this farm boy, you know, He said, “I come to preach.” And he said he just couldn’t preach. He couldn’t hardly grasp anything. And finally the dean called him in and he said, “Sir,” he said, “I want to ask you a question.” He said, “How do you know that you were called to preach?”

He said, “Well, I was plowing.” And he said, “I looked up in the sky and it says, ‘GPC,’ and that to me meant go preach Christ.”

The man looked at him and he said, “Are you sure it didn’t mean go plant corn?”

Well he did go back home and he planted corn and he became very successful.

Not everybody, not everybody is called to be a preacher. I tell the young preachers these words. You say God has called you to preach? I said, “If you could do anything else, do it. And if you are called to preach, you can’t do anything else. And you don’t want to do anything else. And you won’t do anything else if God has got his hand on you.”

Oh, you may drive a school bus like I did for 13 years. And I am glad I did. Because of it I get a small pension from the state of Michigan and my hospitalization is taken care of. I will tell you right now. I couldn't want it any better. You see?

But now why do I tell you this? The grace of God is not only irresistible, but we find also what is it? It is infallible in its application. In other words, God never makes a mistake.

Now let me show that to you. Turn to John chapter six if you will and look with me at verses 37 down through verse 39.

And listen to what it says.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.⁸

All right. Now skip down to verse 44.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. [Now look at these words] Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.⁹

“Now what in the world are you talking about?”

God never makes a mistake. When he saved you, if he did, he didn't make a mistake. As I said before, he is infallible in it. He doesn't make a mistake. If he has called you to preach, he hasn't made a mistake. But if he has called you to preach, he has called you to do this, to be the best kind of preacher that you possibly can.

And I will tell you right now. That is going to take 99 percent perspiration and one percent inspiration. And you teenagers, I ask you a question. You may feel in a roll. If not, why not? Anybody can be a dummy. Anybody can be a pothead. Anybody can be a drunk. Anybody can be a fool. But I will tell you right now. It takes something to live for the Lord God of heaven.

And I want to... I have to hasten on because my time is almost gone. But I want to share this with you. A little 13 year old girl that got saved and her youth director he came to her and he gave her a brand new Bible and he said, “Honey,” he said, “I want you to do this.” He said, “I want you to take this to school with you.”

⁸ John 6:37-39.

⁹ John 6:44-45.

She went to a public high school.

He said, "Take it. Put it right on top of your books."

"Oh," she said, "I can't do that."

He said, "Yes, you can."

Well, she did. She went there and in those days they had a study hall. I don't know if they have one today or not, but she was in the study hall and the study hall was supervised by an ungodly preacher, an ungodly teacher. And here she had it. She took her Bible and she laid it on top of her books over here and she was writing. And that man walked down the aisle to see if everybody was doing something. And he came to her and he looked at her and he looked at that Bible and he said, "Huh." And he picked it up, went to the door and said, "We can't have this trash in my study hall."

Now what would you do?

Thirteen years old, saved one day. This girl, this is what she did and it is grace that did it. She stood up, gathered her books, walked up to the teacher and said, "If I can't have my Bible in this room, I am not staying," and she walked out.

She was scared to death. She went to her youth director again. He said, "Bring it back. Do it again."

"Oh," she says, "I can't."

He said, "Yes, you can. God will give you the strength to do it."

And she did.

The next day she came there again. Had that Bible over here and by that time you know what happened in that study room. Everybody was watching to see what would take place.

That man came by again. He looked at her. He looked at that Bible. And he said, "Huh," and he walked on.

Three months later, unbeknownst to her, he came to the church where she was a member and after close of the service he walked down the aisle and he said to the pastor, he said, "Pastor, may I say something?"

And he said these words. "In this church is a young lady whose bravery and stamina and stand for God caused me to realize she had something that I didn't have. And because of her testimony, the Lord helped me to find the Lord Jesus. And now I have got what she got."

Do you see? God calls us to live by the live for him by grace and grace is infallible and in its application. There is no possibility of failure on the part of those who receive grace or who receive grace. And then I want to tell you one more thing in closing out. Grace is imperative.

It is by grace we are saved, not of works, not grace and works, not works and grace, grace, pure grace, sovereign grace, personal grace, irresistible grace, absolute grace, bestowed upon us who deserve nothing but hell. And through it all the Lord God of heaven bestowing upon us his marvelous grace. It is imperative because I am going to tell you right now. Without grace there is no repentance. Without repentance there is no faith. And without faith there is no Christ.

Now I am going to ask you a question. Do you know what I am talking about?

A lot of you have said amen. But a lot of you haven't said anything. And I am asking you this question. You search your heart right there. Is the Lord Jesus Christ a living reality to you personally, yes or no? If it is only a hope so, throw off that worn out profession and take your place as a sinner and sue for mercy on the basis that Christ died for sinners and you are the sinner.

Let me leave this with you.

My nephew had a seven year old boy that had a brain tumor. And they had operated on him, but it kept coming back. And finally they told him, the doctors told the man and his wife, he said, "We have done all we can do."

They had another little girl besides Kevin and we find one night this is what the dad would do. And I wish the dad could do it today. Before the children went to bed, he would always go in the room and pray with them. I used to do that with my oldest son, but he is still not saved.

So, you see, you can labor all you want to, but only God can save a sinner. And we need to understand that.

And I will tell you something else. We don't know how deep into sin God is going to allow an individual to go before he saves him. But aren't you glad for one thing?

"All that the Father giveth me shall come."¹⁰

They shall come. And they are going to come begging. They are going to come pleading and they are going to come crying. But are you listening? Hallelujah. They are going to come.

¹⁰ John 6:37.

But now Kevin was only seven years old. And the doctors told them. They said, “Well, that tumor is coming back. We can’t operate anymore.”

Well, one night as dad was coming down the hall and he heard Kevin talking and he stopped and he went back to his wife and he said, “Does Kevin have somebody visiting with him tonight?”

She said, “No. There is nobody here.”

But he said, “He is talking to somebody.”

So he went back down the hall and he listened. This is what he heard that seven year old boy say.

“Dear Lord Jesus, I love you and I am so glad you love me.” And he said these words. “Dear Lord Jesus,” he said, “I know you are going to come after me before long.” And he said, “You are going to take me to be with you.” And he said, “It is going to be a lot better.” But he said, “Dear, Lord Jesus,” he said, “Would you please help my mother and my father and my sister to understand that I will be all right and I will be better off than I am now? Thank you, Lord Jesus. I am going to go to sleep.”

And he rolled over and went to sleep.

Two weeks later he was dead.

You see, God’s grace is inscrutable. God’s grace is infallible. God’s grace is a mystery. But aren’t you glad that God’s grace is real.

Anybody... and I said it before down through the years. If you are six years old, you are old enough to be saved. If you are 60 you should have been saved a long time ago. This is an example of the irresistibility of the grace of God.

Grace will never fail and to sum it all up.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”¹¹

Hallelujah. What a Savior. Hallelujah. What marvelous, magnificent grace he has given to us to partake of and to enjoy through all eternity [?] pastor.

¹¹ Ephesians 2:10.