

EPHESIANS 1:2a
Introduction Of The Letter: Cont'd
Message 3, Nov. 8, 1998

Intro: Having introduced the writer and the recipients of the letter we are ready to consider the salutation of verse 2. The twofold subject of the next sentence in this letter is. In all of the known letters of Paul, he introduces his letter with the words, grace and peace and closes the letter with at least the word grace. Now if we are to understand Paul's words to the Ephesians then it is essential that we understand what he means by the word grace. You may wonder why I am devoting an entire message to this word. This word occurs 12 times in Ephesians. We will not do a message on it each time we come to it. I encourage you to take notes so that you may refer back to it for we will not be spending much time on this word from here on.

When I went to Bible school, modern psychology was just catching on there. We were taught that man's two great needs were security and significance. At first I was very impressed with many of the things I was being taught. In my fourth year, being on the Bachelor of Theology program, I was to write a major thesis paper. I chose the topic of the nature of man. How I thank God for leading me to that topic. But after all my required work was done on the nature of man I had turned away from modern psychology to a fully convinced view that there is no psychological textbook like the Bible. After I was on staff at Prairie Bible Institute I prepared to teach an extension course on the book of Philippians on the university campus in Calgary. And when I studied the introduction to Philippians and Paul's words, "Grace to you and peace..." I said, "Here are man's two great needs." I want to tell you this morning that I believe you can live a very successful life as a Christian without feeling very secure or significant but you cannot live a successful, vibrant Christian life without grace and peace.

2. Salutation

a. The twofold subject

I agree with D. Martyn Lloyd Jones that, "No two words are more important in the whole of our faith than grace and peace..." If we would

know what Paul meant when he wrote these words, "Grace to you and peace..." then we must understand the meaning of those terms. This morning we want to zero in on the word grace.

1) Grace

I looked over the accumulation of materials I have gathered over the years and considered how I might keep our consideration of this word grace to one message, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound."

-The danger of grace

Let me say first of all that the grace of God is not dangerous at all, it is what we do with grace or how we teach it that makes it dangerous. This danger is taught us in Jude 3-4. Here the grace of God has been turned into a teaching that allows people to live as they wish, licentiousness, or want of restraint. The danger of grace is not legalism, it is liberalism, it is licentiousness or licence to do as I wish.

In recent years a number of new books have come out on the topic of grace. One of these books, though basically a good book, lends itself to licentiousness even though that is not the intention of the author.

This book talks about legalists and grace killers in the introduction and the writer seems to find many churches under the bondage of legalism. The writer travels a lot wider and is in many more churches than I am, but when I go about I do not find ours an age which tends to legalism, generally. I find an age which tends to liberalism.

But this book has already led individual people and some whole churches of his own denomination into licentiousness. I have refrained from mentioning the title of the book because I believe that the writer's intentions were good but the way he teaches grace has tended to misinterpretation. That is a danger we must seek to avoid. Some, who have feared legalism so much, have forgotten that the Scriptures are filled with do's and don't's.

I have a cousin who was very instrumental in my growth in the Lord. When he found Christ he was an energetic and zealous Christian. About 6-7 years after his conversion he and his wife went to Bible school. After that he held various positions in church and also was a Christian school principle for some time. Then he went back into running his own logging company which he had run prior to going to Bible school. His sons were making big money. One of them went to Hawaii and met a girl from California or somewhere there. He married her, soon divorced her and ended up in the bar. My cousin went for counsel. He was counseled and given the book "The Grace Awakening." After some time he too was in the bar. Then came dancing lessons. Personal family problems which had been going on for some time now began to surface. I don't know how, maybe through the dancing with others, his wife began seeing other men. Today, they are separated and there lies a marriage in almost total ruin with very little hope of restoration.

I spoke with my cousin somewhere in the middle of all that. He went on and on about Christians being caught under do's and don't's. I said to my cousin, have you read the epistles? And I pointed out to him that Paul's epistles almost all have a section on duties, that is do's and

don't's. Consider Colossians 3 for a moment.

Now we would not be so foolish as to say that you must do this to be saved. No, rather, here is how we ought to live because we are saved. I thank God I have a book of do's and don'ts. The book I have mentioned to you says in the introduction, "People must be charmed into righteousness." But the Scriptures say, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." We must be instructed in righteousness. That comes from do's and don'ts.

-What grace is

Negatively, grace is not the freedom to live as I wish. Some tell me that when you become a Christian you may do as you wish because you only wish to do good. I have not met a Christian like that yet. Anytime you read or are taught of grace in such a way as to leave you feeling OK in wrong doing, you know you have a distorted teaching.

Someone has described grace by the acrostic, God's riches at Christ's expense. The more I think of that definition the more I think it is accurate. I define grace like this: It is whatever you need, whenever you need it either to become a Christian or to live the Christian life. Look at Hebrews 4:16. The throne of grace is the place from which grace proceeds. It is because of who is on that throne that grace proceeds from this throne. In this verse we find that grace is help in time of need.

LEM said, "We should note that there are many Christians to whom 'grace' means merely undeserved favor, a kind of

indulgent "smile" from heaven. **'But grace, in the New Testament, is force; it is a heavenly strength bestowed on men for timely succour; it finds its opportunity in our extremity'**"

-Ill. of an extreme situation: Pilgrim Aflame.

But there are daily situations in which we need grace just as well. Are you a mother with young children? Are there times when it seems you are out of energy, out of patience and out of resources for help? It is right there that you need grace, that is help in time of need. Are you a parent with teen-agers? There are many times you will run out of wisdom or endurance you will need help. Are you looking for a life partner? Then you too will need grace. Are you a SS teacher? You too will have times of need. It does not matter who you are or where you are, if you want to live the Christian life successfully you will need to go to the throne of grace in time of need. It is strength for the day. It is wisdom in problems. It is courage in the time of trouble. It is whatever you need whenever you need it to live the Christian life successfully.

Ted Rendall told us of two women condemned to death for their faith in Jesus Christ. They were tied to stakes at low tide and then the water began to rise while their bodies were held down. As the water rose and eventually came to their heads and eventually they could no longer breath in air, they were heard singing as they drowned. That is grace.

-The conditions of grace

Does the grace of God fall on people at random or is there something I can do to experience God's grace in my life? Does everybody experience the grace of God at

all times? No! It has conditions. God cannot extend grace and peace until certain conditions are met. Let me share several of these conditions with you:

Condition #1 Know God: Study the Word of God and especially the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Christ (2 Peter 1:2,3). To experience the grace of God in salvation I must know about salvation first. To experience the growth of the grace of God in life I must grow in the knowledge of God.

Condition #2 Believe God: Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that we are saved by grace through faith. If I wish to experience the grace of God in salvation I must have faith in Him. If I want the grace of God in my daily life I must believe in Him. I must have a living active faith. I believe that every aspect of salvation, such as justification, regeneration, election, predestination, sanctification etc... all are by grace through faith. The grace is God's part, the faith is man's part. To experience the grace of God man must believe God.

Condition #3 Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. (I Peter 5:5). There is another condition that must be met to experience grace. It is humility. The Greek word is *tapainophrosunee*, meaning lowliness of mind. Tapainoo means to make low. The passage tells us what this lowliness has to do with. It is lowliness of mind or submissive thinking. It also tells us where this lowliness of thinking or submission takes place. It is *under* the mighty hand of God. Then this verse tells us what this submissive thinking has to do with. It has to do with our cares. Who is a humble man? It is not necessarily one who dresses in black and drives an old car. It is the person who can place all his cares on the Lord and trust Him with

them. And this mind which is submissive to God is a condition of grace. God gives grace to the humble!

CONCL: After a good number of years of considering this matter I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing this sinful world can deal to the Christian that grace is not sufficient for. I believe there is nothing you cannot face when experiencing the grace and peace of God. Many people wonder if they would stand up under persecution. I sometimes think it takes more grace to stand up under freedom than under persecution. Do you trust God day by day? Do you read His Word, and is He your all in all? Then you would stand up under persecution.

If you want to experience the grace of God, continually spend time in His Word, getting to know Him in that age of life where you are right then. Learn to walk with Him. Learn to trust Him. Grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you in due time.