

God is full of grace as he shows us in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also full of grace, so that we might in turn be full of grace toward others.

### **God Is Grace-full to Us in Christ (2:8-10)**

This text is a very familiar passage which runs the risk of becoming "too" familiar. But it's important for us to re-think grace over and over every day and avoid rote recitation. When we study Ephesians, we need to move from the abstract to the concrete.

There are a number of definitions for grace, but one that seems appropriate from a Biblical perspective is the following from a dictionary on the Internet: "a manifestation of favor, especially by a superior." In Reformed Presbyterian churches we speak of the Covenant of Grace. God in his mercy shows grace to Adam and Eve by instituting the covenant of grace following our first parents' failure to obey the covenant of works (Genesis 3; Westminster Confession of Faith 7.3).

What do these three verses from Ephesians tell us? We are saved by grace through faith so that nobody can boast (2:8). Nobody has done anything to deserve grace, so nobody can boast about anything that he/she did. These verses give us an excellent example of the relationship between faith and works. God gives us the gift of faith so that we respond to his grace, and then we do the good works which he has already prepared for us ahead of time.

How does Ephesians tell us that God is grace-full to us in Christ? V 4 says that God is "rich in mercy," He does not give us what we deserve (Romans 1) and instead he makes us alive. The sign of the Father's great love for us is the sacrifice of his only Son so that we might be reconciled to him (Romans 5).

### **Christ Is Grace-full to Us so that We Are Grace-full (4:1-3)**

Chapter 4 forms a boundary point where Paul begins to apply the theology (cf Romans 1-11, 12-16; Galatians 1-4, 5-6). The connection with 2:8-10 is that Jesus gives us grace so that we show grace to others. The "how-to" for the "good works" declared in 2:10 is in 4:1-3. We are to walk in accordance with the worthy calling through: humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another in love and eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

We are grace-full when we walk in a manner worthy of the calling. The word "walk" in the ESV comes from a Hebrew term that refers to obedience to grace given, a response to adoption, holiness and unity in Christ.

We are grace-full when we show humility (Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:12; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). One of our great needs, perhaps especially in the Reformed community, is a Christ-filled, grace-full, humble heart.

We are grace-full when we show gentleness, which is related to humility. We are grace-full when we are patient, an important virtue in our instantaneous culture of cell phones, iPads, texting and messaging.

We are grace-full when we bear with one another, especially when we deal with the differences within and without the Reformed community (cf Romans 12:1ff). The HMS Kids Club and Cristo Redentor are good opportunities to bear with those who are different from us.

We are grace-full when we are eager to maintain the unity of the church (cf Romans 12:18). Unity can be hard to achieve, but imagine what we might do if we pooled resources with like-minded churches to advance the Kingdom.

According to Ephesians, Christ is full of grace so that we might imitate that grace in how we deal with others.

### **Are We Grace-full Christians?**

Are you and I grace-full Christians? Do we understand grace from God through Christ? Do we show grace to others (1 Peter 4:10)?

One way to measure if we are grace-full Christians: our response to a changing and declining culture around us. Do we go along with it and similarly decline? Do we get angry and withdraw? Do we try to "take the culture" for Christ? Or do we view ourselves as counter-cultural, waiting for the Second Coming and living lives that reflect that confidence and blessed hope?

Another way to measure if we are grace-full Christians is how we deal with different people and the changing demographics in the US. How do we view the many nations now represented in the country? Do we see these folks as opportunities to share the Gospel which they may never have experienced in their home countries? Do we view the changes as God's plan for us to be grace-filled, loving Christians?

God has been gracious to us in Christ beyond what we deserve or can imagine. Christ is grace-full so that we will be grace-full. Are you grace-full? May our God who is rich in mercy grant us an increasing measure of grace so that we honor the Lord Jesus and proclaim him to a dying world.