**August 13, 2023 Ephesians 2:8-10**

 ***The Reach of Grace***

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 2:8-10 NRSV*

*(8)For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- (9)not the result of works, so that no one may boast. (10)For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

**Notes:**

1. “*Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great* ***sinner*** *and Christ is a great* ***Savior***.”

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1. Prevenient grace is also known as ***Seeking*** grace.
	1. It is the grace given to the ***lost***
	2. We did not first ***seek*** Him; He came ***looking*** for us.

*We love because he first loved us 1 John 4:19*

“*The prevenient grace of God knows no boundaries or barriers. The love of God relentlessly reaches even the most difficult, resistant, and hostile persons. They may never respond in obedient faith, but they cannot escape the pervasive presence of the God who will not stop loving and drawing them*.” Busic 47

1. This then brings us to ***saving*** grace.
	1. By free will, we ***choose*** to receive this saving grace.
	2. Only ***God*** can save us by his grace.
	3. ***Christ*** died on the cross for our sins;

“*We receive the gift of saving grace by believing in God. We throw ourselves on the mercy of God, the father, and we put our faith in Christ alone. We trust in the victory he won on the cross, we trust that the guilt of our sin is canceled, we trust that the death grip of sin is broken, that our conscience is cleansed, and we find at-one-ment with God*.” Busic 65

1. As we live and learn we come to ***sanctifying*** grace.
	1. In sanctifying grace, God deals with the inward ***nature*** which often leads to ***sin***.
	2. By ***faith***, we consecrate ourselves fully to God.
2. God transforms us into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.
	1. Spiritual growth takes ***daily*** practice.

*Spiritual growth occurs best within the community of faith. Busic 93-101*

“*The good news of the gospel is not only that we will one day be with God when we die but also that the offer of abundant life in God’s kingdom is for now, right where we are. God’s plan is that his image in us that was marred by the fall should be restored to all of its beauty and glory, that we would become his masterpiece, reflecting Christlikeness in what we think, say, and do. That is called sanctification, and that is what we are becoming. It is not optional for a growing Christian.” Busic 89*

* 1. This is when we receive the Lord’s sustaining grace.

*Sustaining grace is “the power of God that keeps us from falling and causes us to stand blameless before him on the final day. Such a declaration communicates a very important truth about our discipleship: we can fall from grace, but the sustaining grace of God makes it possible not to have to.” Busic 113*

1. Our eternal salvation comes as a ***free*** ***gift*** of God’s grace.
	1. We do not ***deserve*** it; nothing we can do to ***earn*** it;
	2. We are not self-made ***saints***; we are God’s handiwork.
	3. Through God’s ***grace***, these plans come to reality as we ***cooperate*** with his Holy Spirit.

**Script:**

“***Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior***.” ―**John Newton,**[**Amazing Grace**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/436767) These are words spoken so very long ago but are well worth remembering. How many of us here today have often thought the same thing? I heard this statement for the first time around 2007. I had been working in the public school system for 20 years, but also had been working as an associate pastor here at the ryot church for less than a year. And in the previews for a movie, I heard this line spoken by one character to the lead character of the movie. And the statement caught my attention, and I had to look it up. I had to know what person could have such insight that he would unapologetically admit to such a statement.

The statement came from the lips of John Newton, an Anglican ordained minister. John Newton, however, is best known for writing the hymn Amazing Grace. The movie that presented this quote to so many people was also entitled “Amazing Grace.” And I would have to look hard to find somebody who doesn’t know this song and these words; “*Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.*”

For Newton, it was only by the grace of God that he was able to be redeemed. It was only through God’s grace that the blind man that he was, was able to see the redemption of Christ offered to the entire world. It was only by the grace of God that Newton was able to see where he had come from; where he was and what he was doing; and where he was heading for eternity. The thought of God’s “amazing grace” captures our thankful hearts as we consider the many facets of God’s incredible work in our lives. Today we take a brief look at four of the many ways God extends grace to us. So would you stand with me and join me in the reading of Ephesians 2:8-10.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 NRSV (8)For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- (9)not the result of works, so that no one may boast. (10)For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

Each and every one of us here today has encountered God in one way or another. And when we encounter God whether we realize it or not, we are receiving God’s grace. For some it is prevenient grace, for many it is saving grace, and for yet for others it is sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace is also known as Seeking grace. God’s seeking grace, goes before us, reaches out to us in numerous ways, and draws us to the heart of God. It is the grace given to the lost so that they may find their way to an encounter with the Lord and make a decision to follow Him. What happens when a sinner encounters God’s grace and refuses? I tend to think that the Lord does not give up in His attempts to redeem those who are lost. I believe the prevalent grace comes through over and over. I do not believe that anyone could ever say that God has given up on them. He is always pursuing his lost sheep.

Believers often testify about when they “came to Christ.” We must always remember that we did not first seek him; he came looking for us. “*We love because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). Jesus’s three parables of lost things (Luke 15) all visualize for us the loving, longing, seeking heart of God reaching out to bring his children back to himself. Jesus tells us of the lost sheep (vv. 1-7); the lost coin (vv. 8-10), and then the lost son (vv. 11-31). What these parables all have in common is a story of prevenient grace. Dr. David Busic writes in his book, ***Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace***; “*The prevenient grace of God knows no boundaries or barriers. The love of God relentlessly reaches even the most difficult, resistant, and hostile persons. They may never respond in obedient faith, but they cannot escape the pervasive presence of the God who will not stop loving and drawing them*.” Busic 47

This then brings us to saving grace. Once prevenient grace has brought a person to a time of decision; the individual must decide if they are willing to ask the Lord of heaven and earth to be their savior. It is by free will that we choose whether we will follow the will of God and receive this saving grace. Most people in the world believe in a life after earthly death; many imagine passage into the best possible afterlife (heaven) being granted for good deeds, kind words, and thoughtfulness toward others outweighing wrongdoing. Christians believe that we cannot save ourselves through good deeds, kind words, and thoughtfulness toward others; only God can save us by his grace.

Jesus referred to our salvation as being born again (John 3). He completed the Old Testament sacrificial system in one final and complete sacrifice for the sins of humanity (Heb. 4–10). Christ made our salvation possible by representing us, by taking our sin upon himself, and dying on the cross for our sins; we identify with him in his death and accept his free gift by grace through faith (Rom. 1:17-18). “*We receive the gift of saving grace by believing in God. We throw ourselves on the mercy of God, the father, and we put our faith in Christ alone. We trust in the victory he won on the cross, we trust that the guilt of our sin is canceled, we trust that the death grip of sin is broken, that our conscience is cleansed, and we find at-one-ment with God*.” Busic 65

We then proceed to discipleship and following the teachings of Jesus, learning and allowing Him to work in our lives so that we may one day be with him in eternity. As we live and learn we come to another decision, we also know this as sanctifying grace (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

In saving grace, God forgives us of our acts of sinning; in sanctifying grace, God deals with the inward nature that compels us to demand our own way, which often leads to sin. Parents learn at an early age that their children strongly desire to have their own way; that they are bent toward self and that does not dissipate with age (Eph. 2:3). By faith, we accept God’s forgiveness of our sins; by faith, we consecrate ourselves fully to God (Rom. 12:1-2) and accept his cleansing of our carnal nature (original sin) through the purifying power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8-9).

God’s sanctifying grace works at a moment in time as he renews our hearts by faith and across a lifetime of growth in grace as he transforms us into the image of his Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). Like the growth of a child into adulthood, spiritual growth in grace occurs throughout life. Spiritual growth takes more than time; it takes daily practice. We must cooperate with God as he leads us into Christlikeness. *Spiritual growth occurs best within the community of faith. Busic 93-101*

“*The good news of the gospel is not only that we will one day be with God when we die but also that the offer of abundant life in God’s kingdom is for now, right where we are. God’s plan is that his image in us that was marred by the fall should be restored to all of its beauty and glory, that we would become his masterpiece, reflecting Christlikeness in what we think, say, and do. That is called sanctification, and that is what we are becoming. It is not optional for a growing Christian.” Busic 89*

So once I have received a prevenient or seeking grace I must make a decision. If I choose to follow Christ then I receive God’s saving grace. After receiving God’s saving grace I begin to be discipled and learn what the Christian walk is all about. I learn what Jesus said about living a holy life and I begin the path to learn more about the teachings of Jesus. For me, it was during this time in my walk, that I came to the realization that I am not able to walk the Christian walk on my own power and strength. I realized that it is only through the surrender of my will and dying to my own will that I rely upon the will of God to direct my paths and lead me in all the things that I do. For me, this was when I received God’s sanctifying grace.

But what comes next. How do I know what I am doing that needs improvement? How do I know when I have strayed off the path? How do I know that I am walking in the will of the Father? We know because we have learned to tell Jesus everything; and we have learned to listen intently to that still small voice that guides us in knowing what is wrong and right; which is the way we should travel and we are able to recognize the voice of Jesus. This is when we receive the Lord’s sustaining grace. *Sustaining grace is “the power of God that keeps us from falling and causes us to stand blameless before him on the final day. Such a declaration communicates a very important truth about our discipleship: we can fall from grace, but the sustaining grace of God makes it possible not to have to.” Busic 113*

What many do not know about Newton is that he was the captain of a ship that engaged in transporting kidnapped African men, women, and children; from their homelands across the ocean to the West Indies as part of a trade route that was very lucrative. Yes, John Newton was at one time a slave trader. But on one such voyage, he encountered a storm so severe that he thought his life was in peril and as he stood tied to the mast in this storm; tied so that he would not be swept away by the storm; he encountered his Savior, the Lord, God almighty; and soon after he come to know Christ as Lord and Savior. As you hear the words of Amazing Grace, words that have stood the test of time; knowing what John Newton had done, what he had survived, and where his journeys and Lord eventually brought him through, you can understand how he came to give his life to the Lord, why he pursued a calling into ministry, and how he penned one of times most prolific hymns of all time. He was a ship captain working as a slave trader who had encountered the reach of God’s grace, came to Christ, and became a pastor. John Newton wrote about that grace in a song known throughout the world.

In our passage today, Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul summarizes all of these important features of God’s amazing grace. Our eternal salvation comes as a free gift of God’s grace and our submission to His will, with the faith that he grants us. There is no one person in this place or on this planet that deserves this grace. I do not deserve it; you don’t deserve it; we do not deserve it; there is nothing I can do to earn it, and there is nothing you can do to earn it; we cannot earn it through, not even with good works. Since we receive this great salvation by grace through faith, we have no grounds on which to stand and we cannot boast of our own human achievement or accomplishment. We are not self-made saints; we are God’s handiwork.

Our Father in heaven has created us in his likeness and the likeness of His son, Christ Jesus. He has done this so we may do good works. God has big plans for our spiritual success; it is only through God’s grace that these plans can come to reality as we cooperate with his Holy Spirit.