

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 v 1 - 28

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[0 : 0 0] For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve, and after that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and at last of all he appeared to me also as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles, and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether then it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

[1 : 3 5] And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God.

For we have testified about God, that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him, if, in fact, the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are, of all people, most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn.

[2 : 4 6] Christ the firstfruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him, then the end will come. When he hands over the kingdom of God, the Father, to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he has put everything under his feet.

Now when it says that everything has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself who put everything under Christ. When he has done this then, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all.

Amen. May God add his blessing for that reading was holy and inspired word. Again, let's turn to God in prayer.

Again, our God and our Father, we thank you that we have read your word together earlier. And now as we come to consider it more closely, again we ask for your help.

[4 : 07] Again, Lord God, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit working in us and through us, granting us understanding of what we're looking at this evening.

because Lord God, we don't want to be just hearers of your word, we want to be doers also. So fit us for your service, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, this evening I want us to consider particularly one verse that we find in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and it's verse 10.

And really to look at those who are the beneficiaries of grace. Those who receive it and the effect of this grace in the heart.

And again, as we look to this text, we see what grace meant to the Apostle Paul. So again, if we read that verse together from 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and again particularly from verse 10.

[5 : 32] And it says, By the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them.

Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Where then it is I or they, this is what we preach and this is what you believe.

When we think of the subject of grace, then it should be the desire of each one of us to say, we're the Apostle Paul.

It is by grace I am what I am. And really if we have nothing to say of grace, then maybe it's because of pride.

God is there delighting to be gracious to those who can enter no plea for his favor. We know that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

[6 : 49] And so the reason we know nothing of God's grace may be because we are so full of ourselves to come to God empty-handed, desperate, defiled, guilty, hopeless, and helpless.

God is gracious towards sinners. And therefore we must come to him as sinners, realising that we are not beyond the help of such grace, which is God's unmerited favour made known to us.

We cannot make our sin an excuse that we cannot receive grace. The reason you are not saved, the Lord Jesus said, is because you will not come to me and be saved.

Sometimes pride gets in the way. We don't like to be told that we are sinful, that we are in need, that we need somebody else's help.

And yet when we stop and think about it, that's exactly the situation we find ourselves to be in. We are in need of God.

[8 : 18] There's another saying which refers to the grace of God. And it's this one which says there, but for the grace of God go I.

And if I was to ask you, where in the Bible would you find those words? Could anyone tell me? Well, the smart ones, those of you who know your Bibles, realise it is not actually a biblical quote.

You don't find there, but for the grace of God go I, in the scripture. You may think, well, it has that ring to it, doesn't it? And in many ways, it is true.

And oftentimes, you may see people walking down the streets in a drunken stupor, and someone might turn to their friends and say, there, but for the grace of God go I. Or you might find another situation.

And people will say this without any concern for the things of God, or any faith in God whatsoever. But they will use the words because they realise, perhaps, that they could so easily find themselves in a similar situation.

[9 : 44] But it is only the Christian who can truly say and truly use this expression.

Because only the Christian has experienced the grace of God in that saving grace in that way. And only the Christian can truly appreciate plus how close to the wind they often, or they've been saved from.

And when you think of it, there's not a lot of difference, or cannot be a lot of difference between Christians and non-Christians, in a sense that they are both in the world, both linked to a common humanity.

The same pollution affects each one. We live in a fallen world, with all the surrounding evil. The book of Ecclesiastes says that time and chance happen to all men.

And although not immune to the failings of this world, the Christian has a trust in God. And they can say that we are recipients of grace.

[11 : 16] Are we able to thank God for the things that happen or don't happen to us? Think of physical frailty.

Why is someone ill and not another? What should we attribute it to? Good diet?

Careful lifestyle? Or to the grace of God? What about temperamental frailties?

Why is one able to cope with pressure and not another? When stress comes, why does one crumble and another stand firm?

After all, we are all from the same nature. But again, we can say the grace of God.

[12 : 24] God is working out His purposes in our lives. And so, we need to realize that again, that we are of the same stock as it were.

and in some, the seeds of sin are allowed to germinate and bloom and terrible conduct arises from such things.

And someone else is able to stand against such things. There are trials and temptations on every side to be grappled with. There are weaknesses and frailties all around.

And therefore, people will use that expression. There, but for the grace of God go I.

They're amazed that they are where they are, that they're able to stand as they've been able to stand. And again, there's our recognition of the love and the mercy of God.

[13 : 41] The grace of God. The God of grace prevents and checks. He restrains sin.

And again, as we read in Romans chapter 1, one of the judgments of God is when he removes the restraints and allows mankind to demonstrate their sinfulness.

It's the grace of God that holds people back. That makes us not as bad as we could be. And we need to thank God for that.

to thank God for maybe a Christian heritage, to thank God for Christian, for prayers of Christian family, perhaps for youth leaders who have upheld us before the throne of God.

Have you ever thought for those to whom it concerns why you have Christian parents and somebody else doesn't? what did you do to deserve it?

[15 : 09] What did any of us do that we might know the salvation of God? There were two boys in the same school brought up in the same way.

They were taught by the same English teacher. teacher. They both had a certain talent and the teacher thought that at least one of them should be or try their hand at acting.

The teacher approached the parents of one of them. His parents were Christians and said no, they didn't want that type of life for their son.

The other parents, other boys' parents were approached and so began the acting career of Richard Burton. And if you know anything of his life, you see the mess, the sinfulness that arose from such a way of life.

I believe the other boy became a preacher of the gospel and again we don't know his name. At least I haven't got it in my notes.

[16 : 33] We know the name Richard Burton. We know the depths to which he sank. The other boy had Christian parents and they said no.

we don't want that for our son. Something far better. And surely that boy could say, there but for the grace of God go I.

I said it could have been a different story. And so when we think about it, every Christian here this evening can say the same, there but for the grace of God.

We are so dependent upon, again, the love and the mercy of our God made known to us. God works in ways that we don't really understand.

But we know that he is a good God and we know that he is working out all things together for good to those who love him, to those who are the called according to his purpose.

[17 : 57] God and sometimes we think we will never understand the reasons why God has brought us in a certain direction. And then we have the privilege of trusting him regardless because we know him and we know that he loves us.

But then we can ask the question, well is it sufficient to say there but for the grace of God go I? After all it's quite a negative statement in a sense when there is so much more to be positive about.

To know that the Lord saves us and keeps us, he keeps us from a thousand harms and dangers and sins that could afflict us. The grace of God is not just thinking of the negative.

It is positively enriching. It's exciting, it's transforming in the Christian life. And then again, someone who is not a Christian may say with some sincerity and conviction the same thing.

There but for the grace of God go I. So there needs to be something more. And that's why I want us to turn again to that statement of the Apostle Paul.

[19 : 41] by the grace of God. I am what I am. This is what God has made me.

This is what trusting and believing God, this is what God has brought me to. And we can think of the Apostle Paul, one who persecuted the church, one who would describe himself as the chief of sinners, one who would look at himself and say, I'm not worthy.

And yet see what God did with him. And he says, it's not me. It's what God has done with me.

And therefore, I want us to really to look at the effect of grace on this man. What is grace? Well, it's nothing more, nothing less than God acting graciously with people.

It's God's unmerited favour, made known to an individual. individual. And the way that God deals with people in grace, God acts in an expression of his nature.

[21 : 17] And so again, Paul writing in Romans chapter 4, he says in verse 4, now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift, but as an obligation.

And then in Romans chapter 11, again on the same vein in verse 6, we read these words, and if by grace, then it cannot be based on works.

for if it were grace, it were, grace would no longer be grace. And again, it's all of God.

And that's what we need to appreciate. It's all of God. We see from these words that grace and works are almost mutually exclusive in the way that God deals with sinners.

In Romans 4, Paul uses the example of employment, of work. The wages earned are not of grace. They are deserved. The worker doesn't have to thank his employer for his wage.

[22 : 41] It's his by right. Likewise, the sinner cannot demand salvation because it is not his by right.

It is of grace. The only right the sinner has is to condemnation and the punishment of God. the wages of sin is death. But, don't you love that but, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And again, it is grace. It is a gift. it is undeserved. And that is what God bestows upon us.

And because God acts graciously, not only does he give us what we don't deserve, he gives us the opposite of what we deserve.

[24 : 02] He doesn't reward us with a hell. but gives us heaven. He justifies the ungodly. And God deals with people in two ways, either graciously or justly.

How can a just and holy God give us what we don't deserve and yet remain just and holy? again, the answer lies only in Christ.

And we consider something of this this morning, when we consider what it means to follow the Lord Jesus because of what he has done. And again, we go back to last weekend, when we considered the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

That Christ died, that sins might be forgiven. He rose again, that we might be declared not guilty before God.

it's on the basis of grace. Not because of anything we have done, not because of anything we deserve or merit, simply because of grace.

[25 : 37] And again, as Paul writes these words in 1 Corinthians 15, by the grace of God, I am what I am. Just almost think of him considering, dwelling, reflecting upon those words.

Considering what he used to be. Considering what God has made him. And again, just read those words from 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 14.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst. but for that very reason, I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Can you imagine the apostle Paul writing those words about the grace of God and thinking about his own life, what he used to be, what marked him out.

[27 : 22] Oh yes, he was a righteous man, he was a religious man, people thought well of him, but of himself, he was far from God. he was destined to a lost eternity and God says no, he says no, no, but by the grace of God I am what I am.

It's a positive statement. It tells us of the difference, the effect that God makes in an individual.

and we see this work in the life of a believer. His grace towards me was not in vain, he goes on to add.

Because of what God had done for him, he was able to say, you know, I labour more abundantly than them all. And if we know something of the grace of God in our lives, then surely that's what we would want to do.

That we might serve God with everything about us. And that's what Paul says, you know, I labour more abundantly than them all, that's what I wanted to do. That's my response to the grace of God.

[28 : 57] I realise the position from where God has brought me. And this is the way I want to respond.

not to sit back and take things for granted, but to be useful in the service of God.

If anyone boasts of their work for God and not of his work in them, then they'd better look to perhaps the reality of their own face.

And some on the other hand, they may boast of what God has done for them and yet they themselves do nothing. And this can't be right either.

For grace transforms. and we should expect to see change. We should expect to see gratitude and worship and adoration.

[30 : 22] Yes, we are saved by grace alone, but we are saved unto good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. why did Paul labor more abundantly?

It was because he had been changed. And the fact that God had saved him, yes, the chief of sinners was so amazing.

And Paul therefore labored more abundantly. And so I would ask the question, is there or has there been a change in your life?

Grace explains laboring for God, but again we understand that works do not save us. salvation is full and free and final, but it doesn't come from what we do, it comes from what Christ has done for us.

And the works we do are in response to the love that we have received. We are not saved because of works, we work because we are saved.

[32 : 07] And that Christ Jesus should live for me, that he should die for me and take upon himself my sin.

what a stimulus for service. Let the cross, let the empty tomb stimulate us and help us to be the people of God we ought to be.

Because of his grace we have life and we have the ability to serve God. An ability we wouldn't have otherwise because we would be dead in our trespasses and sins.

Paul says, you know, I laboured. But he just doesn't leave it there, does he? He says, I laboured more abundantly. He kind of says, well, you know, I laboured along with my fellow workers in the gospel.

But, you know, that wasn't enough for Paul. In one sense, he wanted to outstrip them. Not to boast for himself, but basically because he was so grateful.

[33 : 35] And, you know, do we have that desire to outstrip others in the Christian walk? Not again that we should boast about ourselves, but really that we should give an example of what it means to really live for God.

You know, in the situation, perhaps, in the factory floor where, you know, people are paid by productivity, or, sorry, paid by the hour rather than productivity.

And, you know, someone comes into work, and they're enthusiastic, and they're keen, and they get on with the job, and they start producing things, and they produce almost twice as much as the older folk in the factory, because the others are just going at a steady pace, because they don't really care.

they are paid for the time they put in, but this person comes in, and they're producing more and more than the others, and the others begin to look down upon him, and he says, you're showing us up.

And, you know, if you keep on the way you're going, then, you know, the management are going to notice. You're going to notice. You're going to now, we don't want to be those who are just plodding along, just putting in the time.

[35 : 09] We want to be those who labour more abundantly. We want to be those who are seeking to outstrip others in that sense, to live for Christ because he's done so much for us.

It's salvation by grace, and it's service by grace, and the end result is that God is glorified in our lives.

Well, may God help us to be able to serve with the Apostle Paul by the grace of God, I am what I am.

This is the work that God has done in me, and I am so grateful that I want to live and give my life in his service.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Father, we think of that hymn, go, labour, on, spend, and be sent, our joy to do the Saviour's will.

[36 : 38] And, Lord God, we do count it a great joy to be able to do that, to be able to live for the Lord Jesus, that our lives may count for something.

And we ask again, O God, that you will use us in the situations you've placed us in, whether it be in the family situation, our situation in the workplace, the clubs we belong to, the colleges we belong to, the schools we belong to, wherever we are, O God, we pray that our lives might be lived for you, and that we wouldn't be satisfied with complacency, but with the Apostle Paul, we would say that we labour more abundantly for your praise and for your glory.

Amen. Our closing hymn this evening is 622. 622.

Jesus, I my cross have taken all to leave and follow thee, destitute, despised, forsaken, thou from hence my all shalt be.

622. 622. Iestbraj CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

[39 : 35] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Show thy grace and all his prize An age of old and distressed me Till the time he'd say thy breast Thy good trials of it rest me Let will quickly sweet arrest May God's spirit melt me in thee What a fallen smile is mine What a savior dying to be thee

Child of heaven should stow in mine They spread all from grace to glory God's life may and wings my prayer Thent eternal days before thee God's own help shall guide thee there Soon shall know thy end creation Soon shall God's life may and will be thee For to church and fruition May to sight and present praise And now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling And to present you faultless Before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy

To God our Saviour who alone is wise Be glory and majesty, dominion and power Both now and forever Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen