

Ephesians Chapter 1 v 15 - Chapter 2 v10

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 30] Thank you.

Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you.

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[5 : 31] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

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[9 : 19] Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[13 : 35] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. to you.

Thank you. Thank you. Day to me, Godailtrday. Thank you very much. Thank you, it make you. Thank you.

That's Flowers wow-thin cliffs. knew about you and knew about me. And if you're a Christian this morning, God didn't just know about us, but he lovingly decided to save us. He lovingly chose to extend his grace to us and to rescue us from what we deserve, everlasting hell. And so one Peter, in his letter, he writes in chapter one, those who've been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. God looked from eternity past. He looked into the future. He saw you and I. And in fact, the Bible tells us he knows our names as well. Even before our parents gave us those names or decided on those names, God knew your name. Revelation and chapter 13 speaks about names that are written in the book of life from before the creation of the world. God chose you and me if we're Christians.

He chose us. He thought about us. He saw us. And he said, that one is going to be mine. That one I'm going to save. That one I'm going to forgive. That one. So and so. Peter. Isn't that incredible?

[15 : 43] When you think that you maybe wake up tomorrow morning, it's Monday morning, you think, oh, back to school or back to work. Or maybe it's back to struggles and troubles, bullying at school maybe, really difficult teachers to deal with, hard bosses to work for. And maybe you're all on your own in your family as well. And there's nobody else who's a Christian. You think, I don't really feel very great. I don't feel very special. I don't feel very loved. Let me assure you, God's grace, as we've read there, says that God loved you then. And if he loved you then, he's never going to stop loving you now. If God loved you then, when you were, in one sense, before you'd done right or wrong, when he knew all about you, then God certainly loves you now. Mind-blowing.

But then we realized that God the Father's grace, that was the beginning in choosing us. But something else had to happen. Grace had to come into the world to accomplish, to purchase our salvation, to bring our salvation about. And so we recognize, secondly, grace brought Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into the world to save us by his death and resurrection.

In 2 Timothy and chapter 1, we read 9 and 10. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The whole life of our Lord Jesus was one act of grace, one act of doing something for us that we did not deserve. He was born as one of us, born into this world as a baby. We know that because we're told it again and again. That's what we'll celebrate as Christmas comes along. Here's what Paul writes about it.

Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Jesus Christ was still God, but he took on all the weakness and the frailty of living in this world. He was willing to be born in that stable in Bethlehem those thousands of years ago. He lived a life that was sinless. The only person who's never done anything wrong in obedience to God and to his laws. And then he went freely and willingly to die and to suffer in our place the death that we deserve as our substitute. Christ, we're told, also suffered once for sins, the righteous, the good, for the unrighteous, the bad, to bring you to God. That's what he had to do.

That was the work of grace. He didn't just say, I love you. People may say that and use words to say, I'm your... Don't shake my hand afterwards. My best friend forever, my BFF. And they put it up on Facebook or on Twitter or whatever and they say, oh yeah, I'm your BFF and everything else. But then the next day, what happens? They're in with another crowd and they're no longer your friend. They say something, but they don't live it. Jesus in God the Father said, I love you and I want you to be my child and he did something about it. I'm going to deal with sin. I'm going to come into the world. I'm going to suffer and die. And so great was the grace of our Lord Jesus for us that he paid with his own blood the debt that was outstanding. You see, when we sin, we are placing ourselves in debt to God. He deserves and he should rightly receive from us love and obedience and faith and trust. He should rightly receive from us worship and all those things, but we've kept them all for ourselves. We've used our powers, our strengths, our love for other things to satisfy ourselves. And so we are in great debt.

[20 : 07] The only way that debt can be cleared, the only way that debt can be forgiven is that somebody pays for it with their own blood, with their own life, either us or Jesus. The Bible says without the shedding of blood, without somebody dying, there can be no forgiveness. Sin is so horrible. Sin is so terrible.

Sin is so awful. It's not just a little bit of naughtiness when we sin or just a white lie. Sin is horrific. Sin is exactly what we see happening in the fields of Syria and of Iraq and ISIS. We see happening in America with all those people being shoot. That's sin.

Sin is so terrible. And that sin we know is a terrible thing. And therefore, for sin to be removed, for it to be forgiven, for it to be taken away, something terrible and awful has to happen.

And it did happen when Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross for us. Why should he do that? Why on earth should God the Son come into this world? Why should he take on that frailty of living in this world with humanity, with aches and pains and grief and sorrow and sadness?

And why on earth should he go to a cross and have nails through his hands and his feet and a crown of thorns on his head and a spear in his side? Why should he do that for you and me? What have we done to deserve such a sacrifice? Nothing at all. It was all grace. It was all the outflowing of his gracious, unmerited, unconditional love. And if Jesus has proven his love for you and for me, dear Christian, if he's gone to such lengths to demonstrate and to win for us that love, then surely he loves us still.

[22 : 00] Even when we fail, even when we get it wrong, even though we still sin, even though we're not the people we should be, if he did all that for us, then you can be sure and certain that he still loves you today, that there is forgiveness for you. You may say, well, you just don't know how terrible the sins of my life are. You don't know what I think and how I act and behave. You don't know how I've been that person who says BFF on Facebook. The next day I've called them all sorts of names or I've written things about them and sent texts which are hot. You don't know just what a nasty person I am. God does. God knows what your heart's like and mine. He knows just how selfish and how cruel you've been and what you can be like. But he's willing to forgive you. He's willing to forgive you because of what Jesus did on the cross. He took all that selfishness and all that nastiness.

He took all the blame and all the guilt for you and for me. How can we know that? How can we enjoy that? How can we enter into what Jesus has done for us on the cross? How do we know forgiveness? How do we know what it is to be right with God? Is it something automatic? No, it's not. Because Jesus died on the cross, it doesn't mean automatically our sins are forgiven. It doesn't mean automatically that we're right with God. Something else has to happen.

God the Son chose, sorry, God the Father chose us before the world was made. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in grace came and purchased our salvation. But lastly, grace becomes ours as the Holy Spirit makes us alive. Look at what we read there in Ephesians chapter 2.

4. But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions. It's by grace you've been saved.

How does God the Father's choice, how does Jesus' actions take effect in a person's life so they become a Christian? Well, first of all, Holy Spirit has to raise us from the dead.

[24 : 10] Holy Spirit has to make us alive to God, where we saw at the very beginning of Ephesians 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. That's what sin does. It doesn't just create a nastiness in us that makes us nasty and unpleasant to others and to God, but it actually cuts off the life supply of God so that we are dead to God. That's why so many people go through their lives and say, there's no God, I can't see God or feel God or believe in God. Why? Because it's not that God is dead or gone. It's because we are dead. The power supply is not there. The spiritual power supply is not there. So we need the Holy Spirit to bring us back to life, to give us new birth. The Bible talks about being born again or having rebirth or renewal. Here's what Paul writes to Titus. He says, He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is a person who comes to our lives when we are dead and He gives us life. He makes us alive. No one can make themselves alive, can they? Nobody's ever heard of somebody making themselves alive or if somebody has died and become unwell, then sort of resuscitating themselves or resurrecting themselves. No, it's got the power to make them alive. It's got to come from outside of them. There's nothing within them alive. Within our hearts and within our souls, the sin has crushed and taken away all the life of God.

So there's nothing within us that we can sort of say, get up, gee up, come back to God. God's got to come to us. That's the wonderful grace. God, the Holy Spirit, He comes to us because God chose us.

He knows us by name because Jesus died for us and took our sins. So at one point in our lives, when we're young, perhaps for some of us it's when we're older, the Holy Spirit comes and says, wake up, get back to life. And secondly, He gives us faith to believe in Jesus and put our faith in all that He's done for us. Do you notice how Paul makes that point there in Ephesians chapter 2?

Verse 8, for it is by grace you've been saved through faith. So yes, God's grace is undeserved love for us and care for us. It's done all this that we can be forgiven and right with God, but it's by faith we are saved. But notice, this not from yourselves, it's the gift of God.

So just as we are dead, even when we're given life by the Holy Spirit, we still need to be given faith. Faith to put our trust in Jesus and believe in Him. When the apostles went around in the book of Acts preaching the gospel and telling people of Jesus, one man who'd been a prison officer asked them, what must I do to be saved? They replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. We're saved through faith. And faith is a real thing. It's not just a feeling, it's an action.

[27 : 16] It's something that we do. Faith is an action of the will. It's something that we cannot do for ourselves. It's something that God has to do for us again because it's grace. Perhaps you've thought sometimes and looked around and you've seen your friends or you've seen people of your neighbors, even members of your family, and you said, why aren't they Christians? Why haven't they put their faith in Jesus? I've put my faith in Jesus. Well, that must make me a better person than them, mustn't it? Because I've put my faith and it's my faith that I've believed in Him. Somehow I've got to be better than them. I've got to be cleverer than them. I've got to understand the gospel more than them. Well, no, how can we do that? That can't be grace. As soon as we start saying, well done, me, I'm better than them, then we're taking credit for ourselves and we're taking away from God.

No, we've been saved by grace. Faith, not from yourselves. It's the gift of God. If you've believed and trusted in Jesus, it's because God's given you that faith to believe in Him. He's given you that faith to see. First of all, hold on, I'm a sinner. That's what the first thing does when we come alive. We start to realize what's happened to us. We realize that we've sinned against God.

We need forgiveness. God's Holy Spirit shows us what Jesus has done for us, that He loved us and came into the world for us. They took our sin and died for us. And we put our faith and trust in Him, say, oh, thank you. We turn away from our sin and repentance and we place our trust in Jesus alone to be our Savior. From start to finish, if you're a Christian, it's wonderfully a work of God's grace.

He's done it for you. Such is His love. He's done it for you so that you might know and enjoy all the blessings of Him as your heavenly Father, of this assurance that all your past sins are forgiven and there is no longer any condemnation and that you might know that you are headed home for heaven.

How can we respond to such amazing grace? How can we respond to such wonderful grace? Well, we know we can't repay God. God doesn't want us to do that because we know we can't. But what does God want from us? He wants us to enjoy this grace and enjoy this salvation and enjoy this Christian life by living it out to the full, by giving Him praise and thanks. Surely when we receive a gift, we've been taught to say thank you, haven't we? Of course we have. Well, this is the greatest gift of all, the most wonderful gift in the universe. We should be more thankful than ever. We should be going around day by day. Thank you, God. Thank you. Oh, thank you so much.

[30 : 02] Do you have that real living faith in Jesus? Do you have that wonderful gift of God's grace and know that your sins have been forgiven? Do you know that you are friends with God and that separation has been removed and that you are headed for heaven? Then, dear friends, every day, live out your life thanking God and living for Him in such a way that you want everybody else to see what God has done for you. Telling them, sharing with them. This is the greatest secret in the world, isn't it? That's been hidden away. People think that God and Jesus and Christianity is boring and dull and there's no relevance. But, dear friends, if you're a Christian, you know that's not true.

You know it's got the greatest relevance in the whole of the world. If God has done these things, which He has for you, if God has done all of these things purely out of grace, not because you deserve them, not because you're good enough, not because He expects from you some repayment, then you can be sure that He's never going to stop loving you and He's never going to stop that work of bringing you all the way to completion in heaven with Him. Apostle Paul knew that so well and he wrote to Philippians in chapter 1, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you, a gracious work in you, will carry it on to completion, to the end, to fulfillment, until the day of Christ Jesus. That's when He comes again and we shall receive the fullness of all that He's done for us. If you're not a Christian this morning, why on earth aren't you?

Why aren't you pleading with God? God, I really want this grace. I really want this life. I really want this, please. What you've done for others, do for me. Surely, you can't go another day missing out on the best and most wonderful news. Let's pray together, shall we?

We're just amazed, O Lord, astonished, astounded, gobsmacked, that you should ever have been gracious to us and saved us. Yes, we know we deserve something from you, but what we deserve, you've not given us.

For we deserve judgment, punishment, separation, hell. We deserve those things because we've lived our lives in rejection, selfishness towards you and others. Lord, we've done nothing to deserve your good pleasure. Yes, there's a few nice things we've done along the way, but Lord, they don't even bear in comparison.

[33 : 14] We thank you, O Lord, that in grace you chose us. We don't understand why. We're no better than anybody else, but your word says it, so we believe it and we rejoice in it. And you sent your son, the Lord Jesus, into the world in grace for us. He knew all about us. He knew our names. They were written in that book. And he came for us. He came to live and to die and to suffer in our place. We deserve that death. We deserve that punishment. But Jesus, you took it. You took one for the team. You took it for us. Died in our place. What love is that? What grace is that? And thank you that you're alive. You're risen from the dead so that what you've accomplished, you continue to apply to our lives by your Holy Spirit. Thank you that you came to us when we were ignorant and in our sins.

We hadn't turned over a new leaf or started to become better people when you came to us. We couldn't do that. We were dead. You came to us, O Lord, and you spoke to us. You said, as you did to Lazarus, come forth, get up, get out of that tomb. And you spoke those words of life that raised us up so that, Lord, not only did we see our great sin and our need of forgiveness, but you gave us that faith to see Jesus as the one who's done everything on our behalf.

Oh, we're so grateful, O Lord, so grateful, O Lord, that you ever saved us. Lord, where would we be if we'd continued in the darkness and death of our sin? What a mess. We already were in a mess, but what even greater mess. Lord, we thank you that now you've brought that grace into our lives. So, Lord, you're able to take us on further and further until that day that we're with you.

We ask, O Lord, that you would help us ever to praise you and to live in the light of that grace, to rejoice in it and to share the good news of it. And again, we pray for those here this morning, Lord. There's almost certainly somebody here who's not a Christian, who's not received your grace.

They're still outside and looking in, and they've heard about all the wonderful things you've done, but they don't know them. They've never experienced them. Have mercy and be gracious to them too, we pray.

[35 : 34] Cause them to know that Holy Spirit conviction of their sin, to see just how desperately they need Jesus and to call upon him. Thank you that you've said whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There's no excuse. There's no reason why we should continue in our sin except that we will not receive. We will not receive your love and grace. Oh, Lord, bend and melt those hard hearts.

Please, we pray that each one of us here this morning may, either today or very soon, know that we have met with the grace-giving God. And we ask these things now in the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.