



January 24, 2016
Ephesians 2:1-10
Pastor Larry Adams

The Gospel and Grace

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for downloading the podcast of this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

Video – Pastor Larry Adams

We are into week 2 of our discipleship campaign, *The Gospel – Living the Good News of Jesus Christ*. This week, Pastor Rich Murphy has done an outstanding job in our devotional to help us understand the grace of God, as it relates to our salvation, as it relates to what it really means to be sanctified, to be set apart for God, and to learn to live that way. We are also learning how His grace sustains us, and even how it carries us all the way through to the end of this salvation process, because the good news ends up in, not only Christ being more glorified, but we being glorified with Him. So this week, in your devotional book, we're going to be dealing with a lot of theological terms. Many of you have been working on that already this week. As we get into the message today, we want to be reminded that God's grace, this unmerited favor that He has extended to us, is a gift from God that helps us not only to believe and understand the gospel, but the grace that we can rely on as God continues to work in us and through us to share and to live it out to a lost and hurting world.

Sermon – Pastor Larry Adams

If you have your Bibles, I'd like you to turn with me, if you would, to the book of Ephesians. We're going to be looking today at the gospel and grace. We are in week two of this, and the gospel is really good news but it comes to us by God's grace and Paul talks about it specifically here in the book of Ephesians. By the way, I've been mentioning in the services that, if you are a Christian who wants to ride the fence – you don't really want to be committed to Christ, you're just kind of riding the fence, you won't want to read the book of Ephesians. It's a fence-knocking book! The first three chapters tell you what a real Christian is, the last three chapters tell you how real Christians live. A Christian is a person who has Christ living in them, and a person who has Christ living through them. It's pretty amazing stuff.

In Ephesians chapter 2 is a word of great encouragement. He reminds us where we were, and where we are now, because of God's grace. Here's the way he puts it in Ephesians 2:1-10 –
2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time,

gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Let’s pray: *Father, there is only one teacher that we need to hear today, and that’s You. Your word is truth. This grace is more amazing than we know. It has saved us, it sustains us, and it will bring us home to Your glory. Help us today to realize again, that it’s not about us, it’s ALL about you. The gospel. And that by Your grace, we might live the good news of Jesus Christ. And we’ll thank You for all that You’ll show us, in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

It may be hard to believe in today’s politically correct world, but where I grew up in New England, some of my friends went to parochial school, it wasn’t even uncommon to have this once in a while in a public school, but if you were out of line, the teacher might whack you across the knuckles with a ruler! Today, they’d probably go to jail for that, but back then, it was a deterrent.

I was reading about a boy in middle school, who attended a parochial school and apparently, he had a propensity to get into trouble. He was at the principal’s office once again, and the principal asked him, “How many times have you been to my office?”

And the boy said, not enough, I guess.

“And you’ve gotten the belt each time.” They would rap the belt across the bad kid’s knuckles.

“Yea. And I can take whatever you dish out!”

The principal pauses for a moment to think, then he quietly says, “Today, you’re going to learn about grace.”

So the boy asked, “Are you going to let me walk?”

The principal says, “Yes, I’m going to let you walk.”

The boy studies the face of the principal and says, “So no punishment at all?”

“Oh, there has to be punishment,” the principal said. “What you did was wrong, and there are always consequences to our actions.”

“I knew it,” said the boy, and he held up his hands to take the beating.

The principal takes off his belt, folds it in two and hands it to the boy’s teacher. He tells the boy, “I want you to count the blows.” Then the principal stuck out his two hands and told the teacher, “Ten strokes.” And to the boy, he said, “I want you to count every one.”

So the teacher winds up and whacks the back of the principal’s hands. They immediately turn red. By the time he gets to the fourth stroke, the boy can’t take it anymore. He’s yelling out, “Stop! Stop! I can’t take it! Stop!”

The principal said, “Ten strokes.”

So there the boy stands, counting them, “Five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.”

The principal stood there, sweat glistening on his forehead, and his hands now swollen and red. He takes one of those swollen, red hands, and he puts it on the shoulder of that boy and says to him, “That’s grace.”

Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is when we are given what we don’t deserve. Honestly, there’s no one here today less deserving of grace than me. There is no one more gracious than God.

This week, Pastor Rich, in his very insightful devotionals (I hope you’ll go back through them a couple of times. I have. I learn each time I go over it again), he quoted J. I Packer’s *Knowing God*:

The grace of God is love, freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit, and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity.

You see, the gospel is the good news about what the death, burial and resurrection and appearing of Jesus have accomplished for us. And the gospel is the good news of the grace that makes that possible.

We are in week two of our discipleship campaign, The Gospel – Living the Good News of Jesus Christ. Last week, we learned that the gospel is simple. It is the message of good news: the death, burial, resurrection and appearing of Jesus. We are learning all the ways that that gospel message has ramifications in our lives. It is a message to be proclaimed. It is a message to be lived out. And it is a message that can be lived and believed only by the grace of God.

Pastor Rich taught us this week that the meaning of the word ‘grace’ is even hard to simply define. In fact, he said, obviously a simple definition of the Greek word for grace cannot adequately communicate how very incredible God’s grace really is. Nor can any definition adequately communicate the experiential and transformational possibilities of God’s grace. He went on to say, we can’t possibly understand or experience the fullness of life that Jesus came to give us without clearly understanding and experiencing the fullness of God’s grace through the gospel. The word ‘grace’ is used so casually, he said, and routinely by Christians, that the immensity of its full potential to transform sinners into saints, has been severely muted. Grace is, he said, a lot more than “Gods Riches At Christ’s Expense.” Grace is a lot more than God’s unmerited favor toward wrath-deserving sinners. Grace is a lot more than just amazing!

Which is why Paul told the Ephesian church that life begins with grace, is sustained by grace, and life is completed into eternity by God’s grace. Paul shares with these Ephesians that the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the good news of God’s grace.

What is the good news of God’s grace?

People – this is overwhelming! Think about this. Paul said, the good news is, we were given life when we deserved death. We were given love when we deserved wrath. We were given heaven with Jesus when we deserved hell without Him.

The gospel is the good news of God’s grace that gives us life when we deserved death.

Paul put it like this in Ephesians (2:1-2; 4-5)

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Dead things can't do anything to save themselves. I first saw him about ten days ago. It might have been a her, I'm not sure. It was pretty squished on the road. It was a poor opossum who apparently picked a bad time to cross the street. I saw him when I was out jogging. He must have been hit fairly recently the first time I saw him, because he was still fairly well intact, but clearly dead. Over the days that I went jogging past him, he got flatter and flatter and flatter until just the other day when I went, he looked like a opossum rug! He was just a fir, flat, squat down. I mean, there was nothing much left between him and the pavement.

Now, when you see a opossum hit like that in the road, dead, you may ask yourself, why would it just lay there and allow itself to get squished even flatter? The answer is obvious: he keeps laying there because of the first part – he's DEAD! Dead things can't do anything to save themselves.

Paul told the Ephesian Christians the reason you can't save yourself is – you're dead. You're dead in your trespasses and sins. That's a message the world doesn't want to hear. Satan doesn't want them to hear it. People don't want to be told they are powerless to do anything to save themselves. But we are. We need God's grace because we are dead in our sins and we do not deserve to live. Paul said (Eph 2 1-5)

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [That's Satan himself] ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

I love this part: Larry, you were in your sin! But in Christ you are no longer. You were dead and separated from God, but in Christ you are no longer. By your sin and rebellion against God, you deserve to die, but in Christ, you will no longer! It's all by God's grace. I couldn't do anything to bring about that change. I was spiritually dead. That's where salvation begins, when we recognize how dead we really are.

The Bible teaches us that God created man in His image, making him body, soul and spirit. The body is our "earth suit" that carries us around. It is getting older, it is feeble and subject to disease. One day, it is going to die. The soul is the "real us" inside of here. Our personality, it's what makes us, us. That's eternal. What's up for grabs is where it is going to spend eternity and the quality of it. The spirit is the unique part of man. It sets apart from the animal world. Our spirit was designed to be alive and connect with God's spirit, so that we would have life. God is life. To be connected to God is to have life. Spiritually, when that separation comes, you are dead. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they died that day. Their bodies didn't die, their souls didn't die. It was their spirits that died. And since that time, humanity has inherited a dead spirit. That's what sin does. It kills us spiritually. That's why you can find people today trying to find the meaning of life to their body, and in themselves (their own desires). That's why people can have the whole world, but they come up empty. Why is that? Because

life isn't found in the body. It isn't found in the soul, it's found in the spirit, a spiritual connection with God.

Paul told the Romans (Romans 6:23) "The wages of sin is death." Your spirit is dead. Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."

If we die physically, while we are dead spiritually, then we will die eternally. We'll get what we chose. We'll get what we deserve. We'll be separated from God forever. The bad news is, since we are spiritually dead, there's nothing we can do to change our situation. That's why we tell people all the time, God's not sending people to hell. He doesn't have to. We're all on our way there naturally. We need God to intervene! We need God to save us. The good news is, God can save us and He did.

(Eph 2:4-5) Paul wrote, "⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

God did it all. We could do nothing, so God did everything. It's a gift of His grace. It is His unmerited favor. That's why Paul said (Rom 5:17):

¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Pastor Rich put it like this (Campaign, Week 2, Day 1):

"Our salvation is a free and perfect gift from our loving savior. We cannot contribute anything to its purchase, or can we contribute anything to its maintenance." It is pure grace. We deserve death, and God gave us life when we believed in the death, burial and resurrection and appearing of Jesus.

That is good news! That's the gospel! It's the gospel of His grace.

Not only did His grace give us life when we deserved death, **but the gospel is the good news of God's grace that gives us love when we deserved wrath.**

Paul said (Eph 2:3-5)

³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Sometimes, wrath is deserved. Many of you know, I grew up in rural New England. We do things a bit differently there. I was the oldest of three boys, and we were just a little bit apart, so as we grew up we did a lot of things together. We shared the same bedroom, had the same toys, had the same experiences. In the wintertime, we would bomb each other. We would divide up sides, two against one, and we'd bomb each other with snowballs. In the spring, we'd do it with rocks, because we didn't have snow balls. I'm serious! We'd divide up teams, get two piles of rocks, get behind a log or something and we'd be throwing rocks at each other until the rocks were gone. Great! You've heard the phrase, "you've got rocks in your head"? I really do!

One day, I was out shooting my bow an arrow. I had a target bow, which isn't terribly powerful, one of those old wooden things, and I had some target arrows. They had little metal tips on them, but they are

not terribly sharp. They do stick into a bale of hay or whatever. I was out there in the yard, shooting my bow and arrow, getting bored shooting at these targets. Then I saw my brother, Kevin, running across the yard. (Laughter). I thought, *I wonder if I could hit a moving target?* So I pulled that thing back and “ch”, and I found out I could hit a moving target! I hit him right in the leg. Now, it bounced off, and I thought *no harm done*. My brother did not see it that way. In fact, it apparently hurt quite a bit. I just have to tell you, I have never, ever in my life see anyone this angry! Ever! I was the oldest, but my brother was so hopping mad, he terrified me. He came running after me, finally caught me, grabbed my bow and arrow – psh! Busted it over his knee. And he kept coming after me! Saying something about how much he loved me – not exactly! It had something to do with the fact that, if I ever did that again, and he got his hands on me, my life was going to be shortened in some way.

My brother was angry, and he had every right to be. I deserved that wrath. What I had done was stupid. It was selfish. It was dangerous. And it was wrong. I was gratifying the cravings of my own flesh, my own thoughts and desires, and at that moment thinking nothing of my brother!

People, you and I may not do it very often, shoot a bow and arrow at somebody, but we put out thoughts, our cravings, our desires first all the time, and we leave in our wake, a path of destruction. It isn't about what God wants or the other person wants, it's what we want. That's where we live. That's what sin does to us at times.

I was thinking about that this week when I was reading this, deserving of wrath, and I was thinking, *God! How angry You must be at sin and what it's doing to the world You created, and what it does in me and what it does in others that You love!* God said wrath is directed toward sin. We were, by nature, deserving of it. Paul said in Eph 2:3 “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”

We're sinners by nature and by choice. Our lives in sin prove that wrath is deserved. “All of us also lived among them.” Who is the “them”? The people who are dead in their transgressions and sins. The people who are rebelling against God. The people who are aligning themselves with Satan's disobedience. Those who are not living to please God, but those who are living to please only themselves. That's the “them”. I was there.

The good news is, by God's grace, He didn't give us wrath. He gave us love! A love we didn't deserve. Paul said (Eph 2:4-5) ⁴ “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Because of His great love for us.

That word ‘love’ is the word ‘agape’. We hear it all the time: God's unconditional love. But there's another side to this. The unconditional love of God, but it's the same word that Paul is using to describe the love that God has for the Son. What Paul is saying is, because of God's great love for you, which is the same love He has for Jesus, He has saved you from that wrath.

The grace can't be given to us without God's wrath and justice being poured out on sin. God's wrath has to be appeased. We call that “propitiation.” Sin has to be forgiven. We call that “atonement” or “justice”.

So here's what God did. God poured out His wrath on Jesus so He would be fully justified in pouring out His love on me! Do you want to see what the wrath of God can do? Look at the cross. That's where

He poured it out. God's wrath has to be poured out against sin, and it was. So with justice fully met, God was now justified to pour out His love on me.

Paul said (Rom 5:8-11)

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Peter put it like this in 1 Peter 2:24:

²⁴ "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."²⁵

Therefore, we are to live out our response to this good news of His grace, by living a life set apart for God; a life as a "saint". A saint isn't some kind of gospel super-hero that you can pray to and he'll intercede for you. That's a total invention. A saint is a Christian whose life is to be set apart for God. Before, my life was set apart for me. Now, my life is set apart for God. Before, I lived for my purpose. Now I live for God's purposes. It's the definition of being a saint. Paul told the Ephesians (5:1-7)

⁵ ¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy [the word is 'saintly'] people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

It doesn't mean you can't tell a joke or laugh or have fun. It means there's not a coarseness to it. Not a crudeness to it. No obscenity to it. You have nothing to do with that anymore.

⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater [they are not worshipping God, they're worshipping something else, because people who worship God don't live like this]—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

Paul told the Thessalonians in 1 Thess 5:5-10

⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation

through our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, [whether we are here on this earth, or home in heaven] we may live together with him.

We deserved His wrath, but we were given His love. That's good news. That's the gospel. The gospel of His grace.

Not only life instead of death, and love instead of wrath, but the gospel is the good news of God's grace that gives us heaven with Jesus instead of hell without Him.

Paul said in Eph 2:6-7

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Skye Jethani wrote a book called *The Divine Commodity*. It came out a few years ago. In that book, he was telling a story about a trip he took to India with his dad. While walking the streets of New Delhi, a little boy approached him. They described him as a skinny little guy, skinny as a rail, naked except for tattered blue shorts, his legs were stiff and contorted like a wire hanger twisted upon itself. Because of his condition, the little boy could only waddle along on his calloused knees. He made his way toward Skye and his father and cried out, "One rupee please! One rupee!"

Skye Jethani described what happened when his father eventually responded to the boy's persistent begging.

"What do you want?" my father asked.

"One rupee, sir," the boy said while motioning with his hand and bowing in deference.

My father laughed. "How about I give you five rupees?" he said.

The boy's submissive countenance suddenly became defiant. He retracted his hand, sneered at us. He thought my father was joking, having a laugh at his expense. After all, no one would willingly give up five rupees for a boy like him.

The boy started shuffling away, mumbling curses under his breath.

Most people would have just forgotten about it, and dismissed it. After all, the boy was cussing him out. Not exactly the attitude you want to give to.

My father reached into his pocket and hearing the coins jingle, the boy stopped. He looked back over his shoulder and my father was holding out a five-rupee coin. He approached the stunned boy and placed the coin in his hand. The boy didn't move. He didn't say a word. He just stared in disbelief at what was in his hand.

My father and I passed him, didn't say a word, crossed the street and proceeded on.

A moment later, the shouting resumed, except this time the boy was shouting, “Thank you! Thank you, Sir! Bless you!” He raced along on his two calloused knees, crossed the street, came after us once again. This time, not for money. This time, he came to bow and touch my father’s feet.

Someday, you and I who have believed the gospel and received it are going to have a moment like that with God. When you stand in heaven with Him and you realize in disbelief what God has done for you, you’ll be overwhelmed. You’ll be shocked. You won’t be able to press low enough to the ground just to kiss His feet.

It’s like the now famous song by Mercy Me: I can only imagine. I can only imagine.

When we’re there, seeing God and all His glory, and ourselves seated with Christ in the heavenly realms, then we will know grace.

Paul said, we’re not only rescued from hell, we’re seated in heaven with Christ. Eph 2:6-7 -

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

He raised us up with Christ. Literally, the phrase is ‘raised with Christ’. Just as God raised Jesus up and seated Him in the place of all power and authority, so too God has done that for us. Christ was raised, we were raised when we believed, and we have received the good news. We’re just waiting for the consummation. He seated us with Him! He seated us together with Him! We are seated with Christ and share in His glory and His rewards. You didn’t know that? Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” [Papa! Daddy!] ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

That’s our inheritance. We’re going to get everything that Jesus has. We’re going to be seated with Him in the heavenly realm.

Romans 8:29-30

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Pastor Rich refers to them this week in the workbook, as the Five Golden Links of our salvation. God in His grace has done it all. He foreknew us, He predestined us, He called us, He justified us and He glorified us. It’s past tense – it’s done. We couldn’t do it so God did it.

That’s why Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in 2 Cor 4:13-18

¹³ It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." [Why do we preach the gospel? Because we believe it! You believe it? Then you'll speak it. Paul said, if you believe it, then you will speak it.] Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. ¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away

[I don't care how much oatmeal you eat! We are wasting away!], yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [You're not getting weaker, you're getting stronger. In fact, someday, you're going to get so strong you are going to blast out of this old body that can't hold you. We're not getting near the end, we're getting nearer the beginning!]

¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Pastor Rich said this week, at the end of his devotionals on Day 5 "Paul made it abundantly clear in this passage that God's plan for all of His children is to glorify them by conforming them to the image of His son, Jesus. That's what God's grace does. That's what God's love does. The ultimate illustration of God's incomparable grace, is a heaven populated by sinners who have been transformed into the image of Christ.

We shall be like Him, and we shall see Him face to face.

That's why the apostle Paul said God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realm of Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages, He (God) might show the incomparable riches of His grace in us! Expressed in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

We deserved hell, without Christ. He gave us heaven, seated in His glory with Him forever. That's good news! That's the gospel. (applause).

That's the gospel of His grace.

This week, I was really enjoying the things that Pastor Rich wrote, and I loved the little summary he made near the end, on Day 5. It kinda wrapped it up for me, this whole thing about grace. Here's what he said,

I've often told people that we won't be giving each other high-fives when we arrive in heaven. We won't be celebrating our great victory over sin and death. We won't be reflecting over our faithful service to the Lord. We won't be rejoicing over the many sacrifices we made for our savior. We won't be filled with a great sense of personal accomplishment in making it to heaven, and we won't even be thinking about ourselves. It won't be about us. It never has been. When we see our glorious savior face to face, we will finally comprehend the immensity of His amazing grace. We will fall on our faces at His feet in utter humility with an overwhelming appreciation of His incomparable grace and mercy and generosity. We will be awestruck when we finally grasp the full scope of our salvation. We will fully comprehend what it means to be delivered from eternity in the hell we deserve and we will begin to fully comprehend what eternity in heaven really means. We will begin to fully comprehend what it means to be chosen

by God, made a member of His forever family, we will see our precious savior and be like Him, it will be all about Him and what He has done. It always has been. We will celebrate, worship, and adore Him in that moment, and forever after. That's heaven. Grace Triumphant.

That's the grace God has given us. That's good news. Good news that deserves to be shared. By grace you have been saved through faith, Paul said, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so no one can boast. By grace you have been saved. It's God giving us what we don't deserve. We deserve death, but He gave us life. We deserve wrath, but He gave us love. We deserve hell without Jesus, but He gave us heaven forever with Him. That's good news. That's the gospel and it is still saving people who believe it.

So we who trust in it are called to proclaim it. Our memory verse this week is so powerful. Col 1:6 "the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace."

2 Peter 3:17-18

¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Thank You, God. Thank You. I felt this week a little bit like a beggar boy on calloused knees. I don't know what else to say. I couldn't save myself. I can't live this life by myself. I can't get the glory by myself. You've done it all. It's good news. It's the gospel. Lord, help us to share this message wherever You take us. More than that, help us to live this good news so people can see You in us and believe the gospel of Your grace. Thank You Lord, for all that You do and all that You've done and yet will accomplish. By Your grace, in Jesus' name. Amen.