

THE GOD OF GRACE AND THE GRACE OF GOD

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As Dr. Lockwood mentioned, this week, on the 25th of January, we are remembering the first service that we had together as a church three years ago. We met in the Gresham Armory. At that time we had no name. We had no pastor. We had no elders or deacons. We had no building--and that is the reason we were in the armory. We just had the Lord and each other, and really that is the main thing that we have now, isn't it? None of us knew at that time what the Lord was doing, what the Lord had planned for us. We certainly did not know the blessings that were going to be ours in the years that followed.

During these three years we have been in six different locations. We started out in the Gresham Armory. Then for a few Sundays we were at David Douglas High School. After that we went out to Centennial High School, and then the Lord opened the way for us to get into the Parkrose District. And we have been in three Parkrose Schools: the Thompson School, the Sacramento School, and our present location here at the Knott School. We have certainly learned that the church is not a building, but that the church is the people. And though we move from place to place (which is supposed to hurt you if you are just a starting church), we have seen the blessing of God. And the Lord has even been pleased to add to our numbers during these years.

As time went on, I was called to be the pastor. We chose the name Trinity Bible Church because that name represents what we believe. We stand for the glory of the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We seek, by the grace of God, to proclaim His Word, recognizing that the church, the local church, was established by God for the purpose of the edification of His people as well as for the united ministry that His people are to have to the world. Elders and deacons were appointed. We have seen the Lord working among us, and we want to give all of the glory to Him this morning.

The Lord has given us a radio ministry. He has enabled us to have a part in the ministry of Hillcrest Chapel in west Portland where you know Gary is ministering. The Lord has given us the privilege of having a part in the ministry of the Huggins and Landis families in Japan, and many, many more ministries that we have enjoyed as a church. Although we have never taken an offering, God has provided for us in a most wonderful and abundant way. I am sure you join with me this morning in saying that we want all of the glory for all of the blessings that we have received to go to God because it rightfully belongs to Him. Many of you were in the armory three years ago, and the rest of you have

been led to join us in this ministry since then. The Lord has been very, very good to us over these three years.

As we were listening to the Sunday School lesson this morning, I could not help but think of how Ephesians 3:20 really describes what the Lord has done and how He has worked in our behalf--"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." And I might add, more than we ever deserved. Those of you who were present at our first service three years ago will remember, I trust, that I said that we did not want to start another church just to be starting a church. We needed to be sure that the Lord was leading, and we needed to have a real purpose for our existence. Portland is filled with churches, and many of them, thank God, are preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But most of us have had an opportunity to see that there is in the professing church today such a humanistic, man-centered message coming from our pulpits that any emphasis upon the sovereignty of God not only sounds like a foreign language to many Christians, but, as has been the case throughout history, has stirred up opposition from within our churches.

Now we firmly believe that the Lord has led us to proclaim His sovereign grace, to give Him the glory in salvation which rightly belongs to Him. In these days when we are so often told that man is the one who determines his own salvation, and that he has a free will which controls his own destiny, and that the one main business of the church is to try to convince as many people as possible that God will save them if they will only let Him save them, we are thankful to be a part of what God seems to be doing throughout our country to revive the truths of His wonderful grace. These are certainly not new truths because these are as old as the Word of God itself. But we find that Christians generally today believe that the better we do our job, the more people there are going to be in heaven, that God has done His part in sending the Lord Jesus Christ, and now it is up to us to see that we can get as many people as possible saved.

Now, as I said, there seems to be a move not only throughout our country, but throughout the world, in which God is bringing his people back to see these great truths that have been neglected, and it is wonderful to be a part of what He is doing to bring the Church back to a God-centered ministry and away from a man-centered ministry. In our attempt to get as many people saved as we possibly can, there has been an ignoring of many of these doctrines and a toning down of the Gospel. If we believe that man determines his own destiny, that he holds the power within himself to "decide for Christ," then we do not need to rely upon the sovereignty of God, and we do not need to pay any attention to the doctrines of sovereign grace. We believe that the Lord has raised up Trinity Bible Church to declare that salvation is of the Lord, that man really has no part in his salvation, that salvation is of grace, all of grace. And we as a church stand for these doctrines.

Now I am sure that we do not all understand the the doctrines of grace to the same degree. It may be that some of you are still struggling with some of these great truths. But we can be thankful that our hearts are open to these truths, that we have the freedom to proclaim them, and that our purpose is to see that we bring glory to our infinite, holy, and omnipotent God. I am sure that most Christians, if they will stop to think about it, would reject the idea that God stands helplessly by, pleading with men to let Him save them, hoping that you and I are going to say the right things so that we will not turn people away. We firmly believe that we are to preach the Gospel. We believe that we are to speak the truth in love. We believe that we are to beseech men to be reconciled to God. We believe that we are to pray that people will be saved. But we believe that God has a plan that He established before time began, and that He is carrying out that plan just as He ordered it in the beginning. We believe with Paul that God is working all things out after the counsel of His own will. See Ephesians 1:11. If salvation is by grace,

then it has to be of God, and it cannot be by the works of men. Paul said this in Romans chapter 11, verses 5 and 6, when he said, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work."

So on this anniversary, the third anniversary of our beginning as a church, I want to begin again to go over with you these great doctrines of the grace of God which we find in the Scriptures. And I trust that, under the blessing of God, these truths will be proclaimed from this pulpit until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

My text this morning is in the fifth chapter of 1 Peter. If you will turn to the Scripture reading again, I want to consider three verses with you. We are sometimes told that the emphasis upon election and the sovereignty of God is mainly Pauline teaching. But I want you to see this morning that the Apostle Peter taught exactly the same thing. Let me read verses 10, 11, and 12, and you follow, if you will, in your Bible.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make your perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

My subject this morning is, "The God of Grace and the Grace of God." You see the first part in verse 10: "...the God of all grace." You see the second one in the twelfth verse: "...this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand."

I. WHERE PETER BEGAN: "the God of all grace."

As Peter closed his Epistle, he spoke again of salvation. The significant thing about this is to see where Peter began. He began by speaking of God and calling Him "the God of all grace." There really is not any other way that you and I can understand salvation. Salvation originated in the heart of God. It was planned by God. It is being carried out by God, as He works, to be sure, through His people, guiding and blessing them through the ministry of the Word. We see this so many places in the Word that I could not possibly read all of the passages this morning in the Word of God that indicate that salvation begins with God. But let me go back to some of the passages that we have been covering in Sunday School.

When Paul began his letter to the church at Ephesus and he wrote about some of the blessings that we have in salvation, he did not give a bit of the credit to the Ephesians, nor did he take any of the credit to himself. Instead he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3a). And then, when you get to the second chapter of the book of Ephesians, in those first three verses, you see what man is before salvation, what man is by nature, how hopelessly in bondage he is to the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the transition from that hopeless condition to the brighter side of salvation is stated there in verse 4 when he said, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" So again you see that when the Apostle Paul spoke of salvation, it is to God that the glory is given because it is God who

ordained salvation, it is God Who has planned it all, it is God who is working through His people in the ministry of the Word, but salvation is of the Lord.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is the reason that in our text for today the Apostle Peter said in verse 11, "To him," to God, "be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." So when man intrudes and takes any of the credit for his salvation, for his own faith, for his moving in the direction of God, it is clear that he does not understand how he was brought to Christ. God is the One Who moves upon our hearts. The Gospel is a Gospel that has been given to us by the God of all grace.

II. THE MEANING OF GRACE

Now, secondly, I want you to think with me for a few moments about the meaning of the word "grace." Peter used it a number of times in this Epistle. And we find it all through the Word of God. Perhaps the most common definition that we have, is that grace means the unmerited favor of God, the undeserved favor of God. God, in providing salvation for men has done something for them which they do not deserve. We are not worthy of it; we cannot earn it; it cannot be purchased with money. Isaiah said that long ago. See Isaiah 55:1. There is no way that man can obtain salvation except by grace. And this means then that salvation is a gift from God.

But grace also means something else. It means that salvation is something which man desperately needs. It means that apart from this grace, man is hopelessly lost, under divine judgment, bound for an eternal hell without God because he is without Christ, without any hope beyond death and the grave. So one reason that we speak of these doctrines of grace, is that they leave man absolutely no room to glory in what he is or in what he can do. Consequently, whenever you come to the word grace where it has to do with salvation, you must immediately think of the hopelessness of man's condition. The title that has been used to describe this doctrine, as you find it throughout the Word of God, is the doctrine of total depravity. This does not mean that men do not do good things as far as our human standards are concerned, nor does it mean that every man is as bad as he can possibly be. But it does mean that man in his natural state cannot please God and that he will not seek God because he has been totally and hopelessly ruined by sin.

Now how does this sound alongside of the teaching that we often hear in our churches about self-love and about our need for self-esteem, and how we ought to love ourselves? You see, teaching of this nature is completely foreign to the Scriptures. Listen to what Job said about himself when he understood the greatness, and the majesty, and the holiness of God. He said, speaking to the Lord, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." You will find those words in Job 42:5 and 6. Paul said essentially the same thing in Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." And lest you think this is just New Testament teaching, in Isaiah 64:6 Isaiah said, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." So this is the reason that the word "grace" is so extremely important. And to proclaim the doctrines of the grace of God means that we understand and recognize that man is in need beyond anything that he can meet, and that God is the only One Who can save him.

III. THE DIVINE CALL -- "who hath called us."

But Peter said something else in this passage. He said, "...the God of all grace, who hath called us."

Anyone who reads the Bible knows that there is a divine call which is issued to all men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The book of The Revelation, the last book of the Bible, closes with this in Revelation 22:17: "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Paul made it even stronger when he was preaching in the city of Athens. He stated that God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). But at the same time in the Scriptures we have the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in John 6:44 that "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And so when Peter said, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us," he was indicating that God draws us when He calls us. And those whom God calls in this effectual way, come.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who founded the Dallas Theological Seminary, wrote in his Systematic Theology that it is still true that "whosoever will may come." But Dr. Chafer went on to say that none will ever come apart from this divine call, and that the call is extended only to His elect. Paul said the same thing in these words when he spoke of his own salvation: "...when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me ..." (Gal. 1:15, 16a), and then he went on to speak of the things that God had done in his own heart. Peter said, "But the God of all grace" has called us. And God is still calling His elect. These are the people whom God gave to His Son. The Lord said this over and over again in John, chapter 17, and these are the people for whom our Lord Jesus Christ specifically offered His life as a sacrifice on the cross.

I trust that the truth of the calling of God and the grace of God in salvation is a truth that you have come to understand and that you believe. When God calls us, it is not some weak kind of pleading as though man were sovereign and God were helplessly dependent upon what man would do. The Word of God teaches us that we have a sovereign God, and when He calls, when He works in the hearts of people, people come to Christ. The Lord does not need the tricks and techniques and methods that are being employed today in so many places. What we need to do is proclaim the Word of God and believe, as Isaiah said in his prophecy, that God's Word accomplishes that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereto He has sent it. We call this the irresistible grace of God because God moves upon the hearts of those whom He calls so that their sinful resistance is gone. When He calls, they come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We here at Trinity believe in divine election because it is taught in the Scriptures. We believe in the sovereignty of God's grace in moving upon the hearts of the elect because it is taught in the Scriptures. We believe that God did everything necessary for the salvation of His people when Christ died on the cross. These are the doctrines of grace.

IV. GOD'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

Now what is the ultimate objective of God's calling? Peter said that He "hath called us unto his eternal glory." But what does this mean?

Well, it means that those whom God calls are going to make it, are going to get to heaven. More than that, it means that ultimately, finally, those whom He calls are going to share His glory--eternal glory! They are going to share the likeness of God Himself. Now this has been known throughout history as the perseverance of the saints. We have been called to His eternal glory. We are guaranteed by His promise and by His faithfulness to us that one day we are going to be there in heaven, in glory. This is what is called eternal security, but it is far more than that. Many people today are being led to depend upon a false security because they have never been taught perseverance. Perseverance means that a truly saved person is going to persevere in the faith. The Bible does not really teach any other kind of salvation. The person who professes faith in Christ and continues in a life of sin is a false professor. He is not saved. A truly saved person is spiritually alive, a new creature in Christ, old things are passed away, as Paul teaches us, and all things are become new (see 2 Cor. 5:17). A Christian is never perfect in this life; he is never without sin. But he is changed. He is different. He is going to want to be holy in his daily life, and he will persevere in holiness on his way to glory. So God has, in His infinite grace, called us unto eternal glory. Now you can see that in these first few words at the beginning of verse 10 in this fifth chapter of Peter's first epistle, we have the whole story, actually, of salvation. It was God who first moved upon our hearts. He exercised all grace in doing it. He has brought us to Himself by His divine call. And He has "called us unto his eternal glory." God has done it all! This is the reason that the Apostle Paul could describe salvation by saying that "he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

Now I want you to look at verse 12 as I close. Here Peter said, "By Silvanus (Silas), a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand." Now "the true grace of God," this statement, means that even in Peter's day there were people who were talking about the grace of God, but their teaching was not genuine. The word "true" here means genuine. It means real; it means that which is not false. It means that here was a group of people in the first century, Jews who had been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ, scattered throughout the Roman empire, who were standing firmly for the true grace of God--they were standing firmly for the true grace of God when at the same time there were others who were perverting the grace of God. How do you pervert the grace of God? You pervert the grace of God when you make it a mixture of divine grace and human works, when you try to make salvation something that is partly dependent upon what God does and partly dependent upon what man does. It is a perversion of the grace of God to say it is a kind of joint, cooperative work that is being accomplished by man and by God-- that God sent His Son, and the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, and now it is up to man to complete that work by adding his faith to what Christ has done. That teaching is not genuine. It is not the true, Biblical grace of God.

Now I want to be just as clear as I possibly can this morning. I am not speaking against the preaching of the Gospel. And I am not speaking against witnessing. I love to preach the Gospel. I hope I love to preach the Gospel as much as anybody does. The older I get, the more I love to preach it. And I want to encourage people to trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody is ever going to go to heaven who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. It could not have been expressed any better than by the Apostle Paul in those words that all of us know. When the question was asked by the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?", the Apostle Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"(Acts 16:30, 31). No one will be saved apart from faith in Christ. But it is important for us to know how people are brought to faith in Christ. You see, the true grace of God does not depend upon the fact that the preacher says the right word in the right way at the right time so that he is the one who is

convincing people of their need of the Lord Jesus Christ. The preacher (or whoever the witness may be) is not the one who persuades them to accept Christ in the sense that the work is dependent upon the one who is doing the witnessing. No, it is God Who brings conviction, and it is God Who draws men to Himself. As the Word is being proclaimed, it is through the ministry of that Word that saving faith is imparted to the heart of the person who hears the Gospel. And so you see salvation is a work that God is doing. God uses His Word; God moves upon men's hearts according to His own will. "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). So we, in proclaiming the Gospel, should not encourage people to look to themselves for that saving faith, but their confidence must be in God. It must be in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Gospel is being preached, when we stand for the true grace of God, God honors the ministry of His Word, and He imparts faith to those who hear and whom He intends to save. Therefore, all glory and praise belongs to Him.

If you are not a Christian, if you are not a child of God, then God wants you to know that you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. He died for sinners. This is the message of salvation. And even the fact that you are here this morning is not by accident. So let me beseech you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to put your faith and trust in Him. Trust in His grace. The Lord Himself said in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." May God give us the grace and the strength to continue to proclaim this wonderful message of salvation and to trust Him to use His Word for the accomplishment of His purposes in the lives of those who hear the Gospel of His grace.