

SERIES ON THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE  
Sermon #15  
1 Corinthians 1:17-31  
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## GOD'S GRACE AND GOD'S GLORY

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For the past several weeks we have been considering, as you know, the doctrines of grace. We have seen that the Word of God teaches that all men have been utterly ruined by Adam's sin, that there is not a person on the face of the earth who is acceptable to God by nature, and that it is impossible for any man in his natural state to please God. These truths are very, very clear in the Word.

We have also learned that God was not obligated to do anything to help man in his sin, but that God of His own sovereign will ordained before the foundation of the world that He would provide for man's salvation. He did not do this in the way that we might think. Instead of designing salvation for all people, He specifically chose from all eternity those whom He would claim for His own. These are known in the Scriptures as the elect of God. The nature of their election is unconditional because, regardless of whom God might have chosen, their election cannot be based upon their worthiness for no one is worthy of God's grace, and of God's salvation. So the Scriptures teach that the purpose of the death of Christ was to redeem those whom the Father had chosen. It was specifically for them that He shed His precious blood on the Cross.

And then, since the Word of God teaches that man is alienated from God, unable to come to God, and unwilling to come to God, it is necessary that God, Who has ordained the salvation of certain ones, should work in their hearts, drawing them to Himself by His mighty, sovereign, irresistible power. He does this through the work of the Holy Spirit. We speak of this as His efficacious grace. He is effectual and effective in accomplishing that which He has ordained from all eternity.

How long is this salvation going to last? It is eternal. The book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, and verse 14, says this: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." It would be hard to find a verse that is more descriptive of the eternal character of the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ than that verse.

But now I want to spend a few Sundays speaking about some of the practical implications, or consequences, of the doctrines of grace. I do not expect to extend this over a long period of time, but the doctrines of grace raise a lot of

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questions. One question is: If God has ordained the salvation of the elect, then why should we engage in missions; why should we give ourselves to prayer, why should we do a lot of things that we are exhorted to do in Scripture?" I want to be speaking about how these doctrines affect the lives of the people of God, of how the doctrines of grace ought to affect our lives. What should these doctrines mean to us day by day? You see, when we come to an understanding of the truth, whatever the truth may be, God has so ordained in His Word that these truths should have a practical bearing upon our lives. I think it can be said without any question that, if our lives are not changed by the truths that we are hearing, then we do not really understand the truth. But when we understand the truth, then it does have a tremendous effect upon our lives.

This morning I want to talk about the most important consequence of all. It is stated positively and negatively in our Scripture reading. I am referring to the 29th verse and then to the 31st verse. The 29th verse shows us the negative side of this. Once a person understands the doctrines of grace, then he is going to realize that no flesh should glory in God's presence. But on the other hand, according to verse 31, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Now to glory in a person means to praise that person. If you are going to glory in yourself, or if you are going to glory in some man, it means that you are going to praise yourself, or some other person. It means that you are going to honor that man. It means that you are even going so far as to worship that man. The clear teaching of the Word of God is that no flesh should glory in His presence. I have no right to honor myself, to congratulate myself, to praise myself, to worship myself, because of my salvation. All glory, all praise, all worship, all honor, belongs to God and belongs to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We do not thank ourselves that we are saved. We are not to honor ourselves that we are saved. We are to honor and praise and worship and glorify God for all that pertains to our salvation. We are to worship Him for choosing us. We are to worship Him for providing salvation in the first place, for His great plan of redemption. We are to worship Him because Christ died for us. We are to worship Him for drawing us to Himself and for drawing us to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to worship Him for saving us. We are to worship Him for changing our lives. We are to worship Him for keeping us. We are to worship Him because someday we will be presented

faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy. That is the reason that Jude, after giving us those words in verse 24 of his Epistle, said in verse 25: "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." So that we need to learn to glorify God here and now for our salvation because we are going to be doing this throughout all eternity. I hope that if you have not gotten anything else from these weeks that we have spent on the doctrines of grace, that this has been instilled in your heart.

One of the most tragic things that is going on in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ today is the exaltation of men. When it comes to this great teaching of salvation there is not one single thing in you or in me that caused God to look upon us in favor. We are saved by the infinite, unspeakable, and wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now having said that, I want to look into these two aspects of what the Apostle Paul says here for just a moment: That we are not to glory in ourselves (verse 29); but we are to glory in the Lord (verse 31). When you read this passage which has been read to us, you can see first of all that we are not to glory in what we

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are; and secondly, we are not to glory in what we can do. Then I want to jump over into the second chapter to pick up a couple of verses there.

#### I. WE ARE NOT TO GLORY IN OURSELVES.

Let us think, first of all, about our tendency to glory in what we are.

Look at what Paul has written, beginning with verse 26. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh (some, but not many), not many mighty (again you would say some, but not many), not many noble (some are called, but not many), are called: but God hath chosen (deliberately chosen) the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:26-29). When we are tempted to congratulate ourselves and to lift ourselves above others because we are saved and they are not saved, it is apparent that, either we have never really seen, or that we have forgotten, what we really are before God. Here is the picture that the Apostle Paul has given us. We must never, never, never forget the doctrine of total depravity. To keep it alive in our hearts we need to go again and again to the Word of God to see what it

has to say about the effect of sin upon our hearts and upon our lives. Many of the saints of Scripture come to us with statements that are recorded for us in the Word of God that should be of help to us. I wish that I could run through all that we find in the Word of God, but let me cite a few examples.

When Jacob was returning home to face Esau after he had spent all those years away from home, he was fearful that Esau still intended to kill him. And it was then that he prayed one of the most wonderful prayers recorded in Scripture. You will find it in Genesis 32:9-12. He said to the Lord, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth (faithfulness), which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." If you are not worthy of the least of God's mercies, that means you are not worthy of any of His mercies. Jacob saw himself in a new light.

When God called Moses and said that He was going to use him to deliver the children of Israel from the land of Egypt and lead them out to the land that He had promised to give them, the first response of Moses' heart, when he heard this, was "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). One thing that those forty years in the wilderness had done for Moses was to instill in his heart his complete unworthiness to be of any use to God.

When Gideon was called, his response was, "Wherewith shall I save Israel? My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15b). The implication was: "Of all people in the land of Israel, why did you choose me?"

David, when God spoke of the fact that He was not only going to bless him and bless his son, but He was going to bless all succeeding generations--you find these expressions concerning David in 2 Samuel chapter 7, verse 18--he also asked the question, as Moses did, "Who am I?" He meant, "Why should God bestow such tremendous blessings upon me?"

Turning to the New Testament, you will remember when God called Peter to go to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius had a group of Gentiles gathered together there. There was a day when Peter would have rejoiced that any Gentile would bow before him. But when Cornelius fell before him to worship him and to thank him because he had come into his home to tell him the Gospel of the grace of God, Peter said to him, "Stand up on your feet, I also am a man" (Acts 10:26). Here was a Jew telling a Gentile, "I am just like you are and I would not have been saved myself if it had not been for the grace of God bestowed in my own life." Paul felt the same way according to what he said in Romans 7:18, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

The background for our text here in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, is to be found in Jeremiah 9:23-24. I would like for you to turn to those, if you will. These would be good verses for all of us to memorize because they certainly tell us what we need to know regarding ourselves.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither

let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his

riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth

and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight,

saith the Lord.

So everything that you and I are inclined to glory in that has to do with what we are is excluded. To God alone belongs all of the praise. God has not saved us because we are wise, or because we are mighty, or because we are rich (if indeed any of these things apply to us), but God has saved us, unworthy as we are, according to His infinite grace.

But neither are we to glory in what we can do. What we can do is always determined by what we are. If our hearts are not right with God, then our actions can never be right for God. If we are not what we ought to be, then we can never do what we ought to do.

What we are and what we do are also referred to in the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. I almost chose Ephesians chapter 2 as my text for today because it certainly says the same thing that is stated in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. Let me take you to these familiar words in Ephesians chapter 2, beginning with verse 8, where Paul wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves . . ." Now that expression means that it is not because of anything that God has seen in our hearts that has prompted God to save us. If that were the case, then salvation would not be by grace. Instead, God looks into your heart and He looks into my heart before we come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and He sees every reason why we should be cast from His presence eternally. Salvation cannot be of ourselves; "it is the gift of God: not of works..." Not only is personal merit excluded on the basis of what we are, but anything that we could do is also excluded. We can work and work and work and work, spending all our time doing things that are beneficial and good in themselves, and yet we can never attain salvation by the things that we do. It is not of ourselves; it is not of works. Why? "Lest any man should boast." You see, if we can do something to merit salvation, or if God sees things in me that make me different from other people, things which make me worthy of salvation, then of course I have something to boast about. But if my salvation is in spite of the fact that I am completely unworthy, and completely unable to do anything to please God, then it is by grace.

It is the unmerited, undeserved favor of God. How could Paul have stated it any more clearly than he has stated it here in this passage of Scripture?

Now let us look for just a moment at the second chapter of 1 Corinthians. I want you to see a statement here because, when you are thinking along the line of the doctrines of grace, it is interesting to see some of these passages. I am thinking of verses 9 and 10 in 1 Corinthians 2 where we see that salvation is not something that originated with man. It is not even something that man requested. Here Paul said (and he was quoting from Isaiah 64), "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Now the things that God has prepared for those who love Him are the things having to do with salvation. And Paul said that it has never entered into man's heart that salvation is what it is, or that it is as wonderful as it is. I am going to be speaking a little bit more along that line before I am through this morning. Salvation did not originate with man, "but (verse 10) God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." You see, man did not even have salvation in his mind. We cannot even begin to comprehend the wonders and the glories of salvation. So it was necessary for God to reveal them to us. We have never perceived that salvation is really as wonderful as it is. This should be a suggestion to us that salvation is not what we would design it to be, but salvation is what God has planned it to be. We could never have conceived of such a wonderful work. Therefore, the Word of God teaches us very clearly that it is all of God from start to finish.

Some of you will recognize the name of James M. Gray, who was for many years the president of Moody Bible Institute, a very godly man, and one who has given us a great deal of helpful work in books that he has written. Not many people know that he was also a hymn writer. One of his hymns is a hymn that we sing often. I believe it is in our hymnal. I want you to hear these words though you could probably say them right along with me because you have heard them so often, and have sung them. I hope that when you sing them again, you really will sing them from your heart. Dr. Gray wrote these words:

Naught have I gotten but what I received;  
Grace hath bestowed it and I have believed;  
Boasting excluded, pride I abase;  
I'm only a sinner saved by grace!

The chorus goes like this:

Only a sinner saved by grace!  
Only a sinner saved by grace!

This is my story, to God be the glory,  
I'm only a sinner saved by grace!"

You see, we are not to praise ourselves in any way for the salvation that we have in Christ. All of the glory belongs to God.

## II. WE ARE TO GIVE GLORY TO GOD.

So let me speak now, for just a few minutes, about giving God the glory. Verses 30 and 31 of our text say,

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom;

and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as

it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

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The praise, the honor, and the worship for our salvation belongs to God. It is not ours, but the glory is His.

But now there are some of the details for praise that are either implied or stated specifically in this passage. For example, we need to be thankful to God that there is such a salvation. It is very possible--and I have been trying to emphasize this in our study--that God could have left man in his sin, that we would have no salvation at all. The fact is that there is salvation. God has provided salvation. This is very, very apparent from our text. It is very apparent from other parts of the Word of God as well. If there were no salvation, the Bible would never have been written.

But we need to give God glory also because He has told us that we must give Him the glory. The statement in verse 31 is a summarization of what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 9:23, 24: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." So that if you are going to give anybody the praise, you cannot give that to anybody but the Lord unless you want to be guilty of disobedience and, really, of blasphemy.

We read just a moment ago that we give glory to God because this is the thing that the Lord delights in. Surely you do not have to argue with a true child of God to do that which is going to be pleasing to the Lord. Jeremiah said that the Lord delights in these things when we give Him honor and glory.

We are to give the Lord the glory because of what He is. Notice what it says there in the last part of verse 31: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"--in what the Lord is, in the fact that the Lord, this unchanging God of ours, has condescended in His wonderful grace to meet

our need. Jeremiah said it so wonderfully, speaking on behalf of the Lord, "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, righteousness, and judgment in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer. 9:24). You see, all heaven resounds with thanksgiving to God when you and I lift our praise and thanksgiving to Him, rejoicing in what the Lord is. We cannot rejoice in what we are, but we will rejoice eternally in what the Lord is.

Then, of course, we need to glory not only in what the Lord is and in the salvation that has been provided, but we need to glory in what the Lord has done specifically for us. People often argue about the doctrine of election. But when you read these verses in the context of 1 Corinthians 1, you see that God has chosen us, that God has called us. God has not just taken what He can get, but God has taken, and is taking, what He has chosen from all eternity. It is His chosen people, His elect, who are being saved. Why He wants us, we cannot understand. But this is the very basis of our glorying in God and giving Him the praise which rightfully belongs to Him. When you understand the doctrine of election, you are not going to want to argue about it. You are going to want to proclaim it, to be sure, but you are going to want to glorify God because, in His infinite mercy and amazing grace, He has chosen us.

We need to glorify God, as our text would also indicate, because of our Lord Jesus Christ: "For of him are ye in Christ Jesus . . ."--the Son of God Who came, Who became a man, Who went to the Cross, Who suffered as no one has ever suffered, Who was made sin for you and for me. God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He

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bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The Scriptures are just full of these statements. We have been placed by God in Christ Jesus. Notice that that is what the verse says: "...of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." So that, you see, all of my unworthiness is more than compensated for by the worthiness of the Lord Jesus. What I could never have done for myself, and what you could never do for yourself, Jesus Christ has done for us. God has placed us in Christ Jesus--you and I cannot possibly comprehend all of the significance of that. His worthiness has become my worthiness. Just as God looks upon the Lord Jesus Christ with infinite favor, so, if you are in Christ Jesus, trusting in His work upon the Cross, then you have perfect acceptance with God. If you are in Christ Jesus, you do not have to be disturbed about your own unworthiness; you do not have to seek merit in any other place. Your acceptance with God is perfect.



Christ Jesus alone is sufficient for the sinner. No other works need to be added. No other works can be added. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is enough.

Then you can see that our salvation not only takes into consideration the past, but it takes into consideration the future. Look at those three words: righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

One of our little pre-schoolers told me this morning (she was talking about her Sunday School lesson, I guess, or her memory verses that she had been learning)-- but she said, "I don't like some of those big words." I said, "What big words are you talking about?" And she said, "Well, I can't think of one right now, but I don't like them anyway." Maybe she was thinking of righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

But you know I have often wondered why Paul did not say in this verse, righteousness and sanctification and glorification. We learn from Scripture, do we not, that salvation is made up of justification (that is, righteousness) and sanctification and glorification. We are declared righteous in the sight of God when we are justified, and we are being sanctified through our lives, and the goal of our salvation is glorification. Why did Paul say "redemption" here? Well, that question can be answered if you turn to Romans chapter 8. There you will see a statement that will explain this to you. When speaking of our salvation, He said in verses 22 and 23 of Romans 8, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan with ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." So the reason Paul spoke about "redemption" here in 1 Corinthians 1:30 is because he was referring to glorification. He is talking about the time when the last traces of sin are going to be removed from us and we will be transformed into the very likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. We, as Paul said in Ephesians chapter 1:12, are going to "be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ." "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven," Paul told the Philippians, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21). John said in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The Word of God tells us that the Lord not only delivers us from the penalty of our sin, and daily from the power and dominion of our sin, but, thank

God, the day is coming when our redemption is going to be complete and

we will stand in the presence of God conformed to the image of God's Son. Who among men could ever have conceived such a salvation? What man, understanding the doctrines of grace, could possibly say that he deserves any credit at all for this wonderful work of salvation? So the grand object of our salvation is that God might be glorified in redeeming us from our sin, changing us day by day, and ultimately conforming us to the image of His Son. We do not share in the glory of it at all. We cannot glory in our decision to receive Christ because God is the One Who moved upon our hearts, and drew us to Himself. We cannot glory in our faith because our faith was given to us as a gift from God through the ministry of the Word. We cannot glory in any merit whatsoever because we have none. All the merit that we have as the people of God is because of our relationship to Christ Jesus.

Since Trinity Bible Church started, we have learned many new hymns, haven't we? In closing, I want to read the verses of a hymn that we have sung a number of times which beautifully expresses what I have been seeking to say from this passage this morning. It is #174, if you want to look at the words.

Praise the Saviour now and ever;  
Praise him, all beneath the skies;  
Prostrate lying, suff'ring, dying  
On the cross, a sacrifice.  
Vict'rygaining, Life obtaining,  
Now in glory he doth rise.

Man's work faileth, Christ's availeth;  
He is all our righteousness;  
He, our Saviour, has for ever  
Set us free from dire distress.  
Through his merit we inherit  
Light and peace and happiness.

Sin's bonds severed; we're delivered;  
Christ has bruised the serpent's head;  
Death no longer is the stronger;  
Hell itself is captive led.  
Christ has risen from death's prison;  
O'er the tomb he light has shed.

For his favor, praise for ever  
Unto God the Father sing;  
Praise the Saviour, praise him ever,  
Son of God, our Lord and King.  
Praise the Spirit, through Christ's merit,  
He doth us salvation bring.

These words were written by Venantius Fortunatus back in the 6th century, and they are just as true today as they were then. Praise, glory, and worship for our salvation belong only to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.