

ONE WORD SAYS IT

Eph. 2:8-9

In this modern day in which we live, most people rate you in the culture on things that are big. Somebody might ask you what kind of house do you live in. What kind of a car do you drive. How many suits have you got. Everything is related to something of a status because we need to keep up with the Joneses. And our culture is all a jumbo size. It over rates big things. Somebody has said we have elephantitis. And that's our big trouble. The best, because it is the biggest. Now that is the misconception that we have. But that is one word that many people think says it all - the word BIG. But Jesus said, ye shall not live by bread alone.

Another word that people use in our contemporary way is that of being lucky. Advertising agencies sent out sweepstake offers. Wonderful prizes are offered. Houses, monthly checks, boats, cars - every prize will be awarded. They promote this material and they declare those that are not lucky in the first drawing may have a second chance, etc. But the man who mails the form back, right away with confidence that he will be chosen - is the man who is trying and crying for the moon.

I want to talk to you this morning about one word that says it all. This is the gift of grace. Jesus offers complete forgiveness of sin. Power to be victorious in the daily struggles. New relationships that will be formed in the fellowship of the redeemed. And everlasting life in his presence.

The gift is of grace and by grace to whosoever will.

The one story - the one word tells it all. Even young people are interested

tool by which you can triumph over sin.

You may say, I am not having a sin problem. Oh, yes, you are. You just don't know. We all are. There is an ignorance in us that send us on an immoral errand - the sin of ignorance. And there is that freedom that we have. And that is what sin is. When freedom is easily misused. You have done that. And I tell you if you keep on living - you will do it again.

There is that tragic passion to want to be God. Many of us who affirm God

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in this - those that have a rebellious spirit. Think about the story of Augustine - how he was rebellious in his life. Had a dramatic conversion. Young people who are conscious of the spirit of rebellion might do well to listen. Here is a Christian scholar who was a rebellious student. He belonged to a group known as the wreckers, 1600 years ago. But the one word "grace" worked in his life and brought about a remarkable change.

Grace is the active principle. This means that not merely God found men. Or was found by man. But it means that man has been found through Christ - through faith means on condition of faith. It is on account of faith. As if faith were the ground. And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. In this statement - the word that and gift are not to be referred to separately, or together - to either one of the words - grace or faith. Both of these refer to the whole statement or the process of salvation. That means, not that salvation merely - nor that grace merely, nor faith merely - but rather that salvation which is by grace through faith. The gift should be so understood also.

That it is not of works that no man should glory. How did you get to Heaven somebody will say. Well, I built a hospital. Or I helped to do this. Or I worked with the Red Cross. Now this is man's way and not God's way.

John Nelson talking to himself about a self-righteous man - I am also right. I do a lot of good things and live right. And I'll take my chances. And someone said Nelson, if God lets you in - there will be discord. Others would sing worthy is the lamb and you would sing worthy am I. An angel would throw you over the wall. Psalm 34:2.

The one word that says it is grace. And grace says so many things. I think that we will limit it to three things this morning. It says he died for me. It says

we have in Jesus Christ someone who can save us from our sins. Now I don't know any other way that it can develop.

In my judgement - at the rock bottom - we are sinners. And some of us are not being able to see, no one but self. To be a sinner is to be a package all wrapped up in yourself. And that's the smallest package in the world. To be a sinner is to interpret your destiny in terms of personal pronouns. I, me, and myself. You talk like that all the time - and you are a sinner.

The poet says this -- I had a little tea party
/ This afternoon at three
/ T'was very small, three guests in all
I, myself and me.

/ I ate all the cookies
/ Myself drank all the tea
/ It was also I who ate the cake
/ And served the punch to me.

How many people live like that - they have "I-itis". When a man is a real Christian he has gotten himself off of his hands. The grace of God now holds him and keeps him. But we are in big trouble today because of our selfishness. And we need to see that the one word that says it all for us is grace. This is the thing that is going to keep us. God's grace toward us is not cheap. He lets us struggle. But faith teaches us that he feeds the hungry multitudes. That he loves the woman of the street. That he helped the blind man. That he touched the hearts of those burdened travelers on the wayside.

If his word is true - he is really Lord, of this universe - and he keeps.

II. HE GOES WITH ME

There is grace that will help every step of the way - and this is why it is amazing - everybody is on a journey. Nobody is standing still. That is an impossibility. The older we grow - the more we are permitted to see life and see people moving on toward Christ-likeness and Heaven or they are moving toward Hell. Now many people I know are living on the outskirts of Heaven. There are others who are living on the outskirts of Hell. I don't want to throw anybody off the side track, and I am sure today that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

And if you take a long look at the people you know the best, at the people you work with, and you take a good look about you next week - you will see that everybody is on their way somewhere. And please God, if you have started on your journey to Heaven, it is Christ-likeness. And His grace goes with you.

How long is the journey? What is the distance between here and Heaven. What are the miles between love and covetousness. And love that gives. It is further than this life. It may be as long as eternity. You don't know that yet. But we are on the way and we are pilgrims.

As one man said my favorite Bible verse is Josh. 1:5 - I will not fail you. Nor forsake you. There is help, grace at every step of the way.

Paul said, five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one - three times I have been beaten with rods - once I was stoned. Three times I've been shipwrecked. A night and a day I have been a drift at sea. On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people from Gentiles in the city. And dangers in the wilderness. 2 Cor. 11:24.

He further concludes that there was a thorn given him in the flesh. A

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he goes and journeys with me. It says, that he keeps me.

I. HE KEEPS ME

This is a manifestation of grace. I do not simply count on my holding on to him - my grasp is too weak. But I can count on his holding on to me. And I can see that as I look back. What was it that called you to follow him in the first place. Who was it that tugged at your heart. Who was it and what was it that gave you a clear vision.

Whether shall I go from thy spirit or whether shall I flee from thy presence - if I ascend into Heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in Hell, thou art there. The truth is that he keeps me - he holds me - this grace says. It enables me to know that he conquers me. And this is the thing when you get your hands on this tool by which you can triumph over sin.

You may say, I am not having a sin problem. Oh, yes, you are. You just don't know. We all are. There is an ignorance in us that send us on an immoral errand - the sin of ignorance. And there is that freedom that we have. And that is what sin is. When freedom is easily misused. You have done that. And I tell you if you keep on living - you will do it again.

There is that tragic passion to want to be God. Many of us who affirm God - we have a problem with ourselves - we are our own God. We see and you see what ever bosses your life - that you are God. But grace says that he holds me.

And man cultivates the inspiration to be his own God. That man sins. But thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. In spite of what we are - inspite of our sin -

messenger of Satan. Three times he says I besought the Lord about this. 2 Cor. 12:7-9 he finally concludes my grace is sufficient for you. That is the answer God gave Paul. Do you believe it. Can you believe it. That here is someone - all this life, every step of the journey, grace is provided for you. That he goes with you. Now if I can be assured that this help is available, that it is His help, then I am not afraid - and I am secure.

That means that my motives ought not to trip me up. That every last thing about me should be pure and in accord with grace.

Dr. Pratter of the Methodist Church in Missouri, said that he started out one afternoon to visit the crabbiest old woman in his congregation. She was a widow with the fastest tongue in the West. I pulled up in front of her house and I sat there for a minute and I looked at the reasons why I was going to make that visit. They were not very pretty he said. I was going to see her because I was afraid. That she would begin spreading the word about the community, that the preacher never called on her. Then he says, I was going to see her, just to soothe my guilty feelings. But he said the Holy Spirit had put her on my heart that morning to go see her. And so, now he says, I really wasn't concerned about her needs. But I was concerned with mine. But he says the Lord had committed this to me - and so I had to deal with that. And he said when I got there - "somehow I saw her as God's child. He says I saw a tender misty eye. And she poured out her loneliness. Most of her friends were gone on. Her son lived a long way away and she seldom heard from him. And there were no community activities which she fitted in. She had no car to get around in. She did not feel wanted or needed. And there was a cry of pain.

He said when I had been able to see her through the eyes of Christ, it really touched my heart. I patted her on the shoulder and we had a prayer together. She gripped my hand and with a radiant face she said - (I'm so glad you came.)

And she said it smiling warmly. Two weeks later on a beautiful autumn day we carried her body up a little green hill, bathed in the sunshine and laid it to rest. And he said as I stood by the grave and bowed my head, he says I wept for her. And I thank God that his grace had gone with me that day. As I contacted her.

Jesus said that even a cup of cold water given in his name was blessed. If we wait until our motives are spotless, the thirst of people about us will never be quenched. We must give the cup of cold water. Now if we are wondering if somebody is watching us, when we do this act of kindness - or if we should advise somebody about it so they will admire us. But that is not the important thing. The motive - it is the water.

So don't get tripped up on the motives in your life. God's business - he commits his business to you to give someone the water. And God accepts you just as you are. He knows that and he knows what you need. And of course, grace, goes with you wherever you go. And this is one word that says it all. It keeps you and it goes with you.

III. HE DIED FOR ME

Grace says this one word - that he died for us. He died for me. In a heart transplant - someone has to die. That someone else may live. All of my life, I have used this phrase - Christ died for us. But have I really seen what it means.

Now God's transplants never fail. And if you catch a glimpse of God at Calvary, the love of God, we'd see that somebody had to die for us.

Paul shouts - but God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Just before writing that verse - he had been thinking of what happened on that little hill outside of Jerusalem. And he said, now a man might be willing to die for a righteous man - and some could bring themselves to do it. But God shows us how deeply he loved us. For Christ died for us. While we were sinners. Rom. 5:6-8.

Dr. Emil Grubb died sometime ago. Now we may not recognize his name. But he is credited in medical science as being first to apply radiation, to cure tumors. For 64 years he knew little but pain. He underwent 91 operations. Which claimed his left hand, most of his nose, and his upper lip.

In 1895, physicist, he worked in the manufacture of platinum tubes - called crookes tubes. Which were used to work with gases. Now many times he touched the tubes - he brought them near his face unaware of the danger and shortly thereafter an irriatation appears on his hand.

In Nov., 1895 - it was discovered that X-Rays were announced by another scientist, Roentgen. And Dr. Grubb knew that he had been burned by X-Ray. So six months later he had his first operation. And for 64 years he suffered agony. In his old age he had a news conference.

He asked, why should I an innocent individual have to suffer like this. Someone asked if he would have conducted his experiments if he had been able to foresee the consequences. And he gave a negative reply. "It was too much to suffer - too much to ask."

Now, I for one do not criticize him for his answer. But the dark garden of Gethsemane was the place that Jesus wrestled with something more painful than

X-Ray burns. It was on his shoulders - the rottenness of the world. All that was layed upon him - I can see in myself. He died for me. That is what astounds me. Jesus died for me.

That is grace. That is the giving of something to us of which we are thoroughly unworthy of.

In the Court House yard, the county seat, in northern Missouri, there is a statue of a young man. In the Civil War, Union troops occupied the town. Late at night, someone shot one of the soldiers, of the force - and in hot anger the commander called the town's people together. He informed them that he was holding the mayor responsible. If the guilty person did not come and give himself up, by noon the next day, the mayor would be shot. The mayor was beloved. He was a poor man. He was the father of six children, all under the age of 10. When the crowd assembled the next day - the slayer did not come forward. The mayor was blindfolded - his hands tied behind his back. Suddenly there was a voice - stop. It was the village school teacher. The young man stepped forward and addressed the commander. Please sir, he said, let me take the place of the mayor. I am not married, I have no family, and since you are demanding a life - let it be mine. The Union commander seeing the mayor's family present was touched and agreed to the offer. A volley of shot shattered the air - and the young man pitched forth his life given and gone. The town's people erected a statue to his memory. But I have no doubt, there were some present that said among themselves, he is a fool. There were some who were chosen another way.

But somebody died for me and I can never forget it. That's what the word of grace says. I doubt if I would have done as much for him had the circumstances been reversed. Now Jesus Christ does not want me to erect a statue to him. He wants me to live a life for him. He gave that life to me when I deserved it the least.

I was in sin living in my own world and God's spirit tugged at my heart and that is grace. The highest hopes on this Gospel hangs on - he died that I might be forgiven. And this is the amazing grace.

Even when they nailed them to the cross - he said forgive them. That was his first cry. That is grace. One word says it all.

E. Stanley Jones tells the story about a play which the hero - the young man, is infatuated with a wicked woman. Whose chief sin is a compulsive possessiveness. The young man begged the older woman to marry him. She replies, she will do so on one condition - that he bring her his own mother's heart.

The young man is horrified with the intense desire of the woman. He goes out and murders his own mother, wraps her heart in paper, and he runs toward the house where the woman awaits. But along the way he trips and falls in the street. The heart rolls out of the paper. And the heart says to the prostrate boy, "I hope you have not hurt yourself, my son."

This is what God does. "We cut out his heart at Calvary. And the first thing he wants to do is forgive us!" That's grace. Since all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace. As a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood to be received by faith. Rom. 23:25

Manuel Scott said once that he was preaching in the Virgin Islands and he was taken out and shown the rain catchers. There was a time when St. Thomas had to depend upon rain water for its survival. So he went to see the rain catchers and he noticed that they were quite unused. And the guide showed him, we no longer need the rain catchers, we have on the island now a de-salting machinery. And we can take the water from the ocean and de-salt that water, and drink it.

And when he said that to Manuel Scott, of course his Christian faith flashed to his mind and he says, that's just what Jesus does. He de-sins us. And makes us suitable and acceptable unto God.

That one words says it - doesn't it. Grace - takes sin out of our life.

As the old spiritual says, there is no condemnation in my soul today. And they go on to sing, I feel alright, there is no condemnation in my soul today. And they keep on singing - I love everybody. There is no condemnation in my soul today. I've got good religion. Now that's the way you feel if you are a Christian. There is no condemnation in my soul today. And the reason we feel that way is because of grace. There is now therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Rom. 8:1

Now check up on yourself - does this one word say it for you.