TITLE: Grace

TEXT: Is. 64:8; Ephe. 2:8-10; Ro. 6:23; Heb. 9:27;

Ro. 10:9; 2nd Co. 11:16-20, 12:7-10, 5:20; 1 Pet. 4:10-11

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about the greatest word in the English language. Actually it is the greatest word in any language that has ever been spoken.

 It is the title of our message this morning…

GRACE!

Grace comes from the Greek word:

 **Khar’-ece!**

***Graciousness*, of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the
heart, and its reflection in the life; including *gratitude*):—acceptable, benefit, favor, gift, liberality of joy, pleasure.**

When we talk about grace in regard to God, we are talking about Gods favor, Gods acceptance, Gods gift, Gods liberality of joy and Gods pleasure…

 When we talk about Gods grace in relation to mankind, in relation to ourselves, we are talking about Gods favor towards us, Gods acceptance and joy and pleasure that we receive from Him that is totally unmerited and underserved on our part.

 Gods favor is something that we could never earn, never achieve by our works or deeds alone because we are all sinners. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

 Scripture tells us that even our righteous acts are like filthy rags in his sight.

 Isaiah says in:

**Isa. 64:6 (NIV)
6All of us have become like one who is unclean,**

 **and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;**

 **we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away**.

 Have you ever went through a particularly hard time in your life, went through an extremely hard trial or tribulation and cried out to God saying Lord “why me”?

 In your pain or in your fear or in your anxiety cried out to God, God, I don’t deserve this. Now, please take it away.

 When we say, God I don’t deserve this, what we are implying is: God I don’t deserve this now give me what I do deserve…

 Never ask God to give you what you deserve.

 If you ask God for anything ask Him for His grace…

 Ask Him to give you what you do not deserve..

 If anyone of us got what we deserved from God we wouldn’t like what we would receive.

 If we got what we truly deserved, what we would receive would be an eternity of torment in hell.

 Spending an eternity in a place that Scripture describes as a place where **their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched!**

If any of us got what we deserved for sinning against an all holy, all righteous God we would get an eternity in hell separated from His love forever!

Example: Mel Gibson in the movie The Patriot expressed this sentiment as he is sitting by the body of his dead son who had just been killed in a fight with the British. He said: *I have often feared that my sins would come back to visit me and when they did they would be more than I could bear.*

 Never ask God for what you deserve, but if we ask God for anything, we need to ask Him for His grace.. To give us that which we don’t deserve and can never earn so we can receive that which we will never loose---Our very salvation!

There are two great Scriptures that speak of Gods Grace that I want to primarily focus on this morning…

The first….

**Eph. 2:8 -10 (NIV)
8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

**8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God9\_\_not by works, so that no one can boast.**

 For it is by Grace, Gods Grace, Gods favor, Gods pleasure that you have been saved, and this is not from yourselves but it is the gift of God!

 Gods grace is receiving something that we could never earn for ourselves apart from that grace…

 The thing is that no matter how good we may try to be we can never be good enough to pay the price of our own sins…

 Before the first sin was ever committed God warned man of the seriousness and cost and penalty of sin.

 **In the day that you partake of it you will surely die!**

 And that death is twofold! Physical death, the death of these bodies and spiritual death, separation from God forever!

**Rom. 6:23 (NIV)
23For the wages of sin is death!**

The word for wages used here is:

***op-so'-nee-on***

 ***rations* for a soldier, that is, (by extension) his *pay or* wages.**

It comes from a root word that means condiment. A condiment is something that goes with something else. Catsup is a condiment for a hot dog.

The wages for sin is death. Death is the condiment for sin.

The word used for death here is:

***than'-at-os***

**(properly an adjective used as a noun) *death* X deadly, be dead.**

The wages of sin is death. Death in its most intense and complete since… Eventually the death of the physical body and ultimately what Scripture describes as the second death--Eternal separation of the soul from God in hell.

 Scripture says:

**Heb. 9:27 (NIV)
27And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.**

 **23For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life inChrist Jesus our Lord.**

The wages of sin is death, but the gift, the good pleasure of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord for all who will receive that gift of His grace.

 Gods’ grace of acceptance, forgiveness and salvation is a free gift but the promise of receiving it is conditional.

 To receive the free gift of Gods grace we must first meet the condition of receiving it. And that is accepting it….

Example: I may want to give you a present. I can have it all wrapped up, even have your name printed upon it.

 It is offered to you free with no strings attached, but in order for you to benefit from the gift that I offer, you must first receive that gift if it is going to do you any good..

 If you just take it and put it on a shelf somewhere unopened it will not benefit you because you haven’t really received it.

 The same is true with Gods gift of grace when it comes to His salvation. It is offered to us and it is offered to us freely but it will never do us any good if we don’t first receive it and embrace its contents.

 Romans 10:9 tells us how we receive this free gift of Gods grace--His acceptance, forgiveness and Salvation.

**Rom. 10:9 (NIV)
9That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

 In other words, if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, that phrase means to come into agreement with God about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to give Jesus control of your life….

 The Greek word for Lord, **kurios-- *koo'-ree-os*** means: (*supremacy*); *supreme* in authority, that is, *controller*.

 If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, Jesus is supreme in authority in your life, and believe in your heart in His resurrection and restoration power ---you will receive the gift of His grace, the gift of His unmerited favor--- The gift of His Salvation and you will be saved!

 Saved from what? Saved from the penalty, the wages and judgment for our sin--Saved from having to pay the ultimate penalty of our sin--Saved from the torment of hell and eternal separation from God..

 So, say we have all received Gods grace into our lives.

 We have come into agreement with God about the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

 We have come to Him sorrowing for our sin and have asked His forgiveness for that sin and invited Him into our heart and have committed our life to Him as our Lord and Savior, we have received His grace, what then?

 Once we receive His grace we are then to reside in His grace.

 How do we reside in the grace of God?

Two words I think would suffice to explain how we reside in the grace of God is Perpetual Surrender!

Surrender is defined as:

 *To relinquish possession or control of to another because of demand or compulsion.* ***2.*** *To give up in favor of another.* ***3.*** *To give up or give back* ***4.*** *To give up or abandon* ***5.*** *To give over or resign (oneself) to something.*

 We reside in the grace of God by perpetually relinquishing possession of, control of ourselves to God. To continually give ourselves over to, continually resign ourselves to Him.

 Do you realize that the word Lord preceded by the word no is an oxymoron? That the words “no Lord” are a contradiction in terms? Whenever we use the word no before Lord we are not allowing Jesus Lordship of our life?

 Do you realize that whenever we say “no Lord” we are not residing in His grace but have stepped outside of His grace.

 Or when we murmur or complain as a Christian we are stepping outside the grace of God and are not allowing Christ Lordship, supremacy, of our lives?

 Paul expresses this truth powerfully in: **2 Cor. 11:16 -30**

 In speaking to the Church at Corinth the Apostle Paul addresses a Church in which many false prophets had come and boastfully preached a false Gospel.

They had built themselves up with much boasting about their efforts for the gospel and tried to exploit the people…. Paul speaks of them as fools…..

**2 Cor. 11:16 -30 (NIV)
16 I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. 19You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! 20In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face. 21To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!**

**What anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about.
22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. 23Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move.**

 **I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.**

**27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?**

Paul got into a little boasting of his own here for what he had suffered for the sake of the Gospel. But even as he was doing it he stated how foolish it was to do it.

 What was Paul doing? He was making a point on how foolish this kind of boasting is.

 He finishes off this discourse by saying in verse 30….

**30If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.**

Everyone else was boasting about things that they thought would lift them up and make them look important in the eyes of their hearers. So as an example to the foolishness of and lack of grace exhibited in this kind of boasting Paul does a little boasting of his own but just to make his point.

Then he finishes by saying: **30If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.** ( not in the things that I think show my strength.)

 What did Paul mean by that?

**2nd Co. 12:7-10 7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

Paul had a personal affliction in his body that here he only describes as a thorn in his flesh; a messenger of Satan sent to torment him.

 We don’t know for sure what this thorn in the flesh was but it was some kind of physical affliction that was pretty severe to Paul.

 Severe enough that it caused him to **plead** with the Lord to take it way--And not plead with the Lord just once but on three separate occasions.

The Lord said no! His only explanation to Paul--- For My grace is sufficient for you, for Paul, My power is made complete in your weakness.

Listen to Paul’s response to this great truth God had revealed to him….

**Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

What on earth was Paul thinking to say---

**I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses---I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties!**

 This is not an earthly truth but it is a heavenly truth..

 God had revealed to Paul how he could live a life immersed in the grace of God. Live a life whereby all the trials and tribulations and difficulties of this life are transformed into opportunities. Opportunities of service and witness to the glory and power and sustaining grace of God.

**Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

 Or…. it is only in our weaknesses that God can truly reveal His strength in us.

All of us will most probably have thorns in our flesh in this lifetime. For some they may be more severe then others but all of us will most probably go through difficult and trying times..

We will all probably have times when we cry out to the Lord to take them away.. Sometimes He will-- But sometimes He may not. But whether He takes them away are not is really not important.

 What is important is that His grace will always be sufficient for us whether He does or doesn’t.

In fact many times His grace is manifest to us in a mightier way in our weaknesses than it ever could be in our strengths.

Most of you know I have a tendency to break things—especially my own bones. And it seems that when I do it I do it very well---I keep my orthopedic surgeons busy and often challenged…

Example: I can remember when I broke my first bone, a double compound crushing fracture to my left arm by having a brick chimney fall on it.

 I wanted things to be normal again---my arm to be normal again and I prayed for complete healing and restoration---I actually came to the place of anticipating the next surgery that might be the one that would accomplish that goal…..

 After a dozen or so surgeries I found that I still had limitations....

Finally, I came to the place of acceptance that my arm was never going to be what it once was…I became thankful that by Gods grace I had the use of it that I did and I came to a place of peace with it….

 A few years ago I pretty much repeated it all when I fell off a ladder and busted up my right shoulder.

 Again I thought that maybe the next surgery would be the one that God would use to make my shoulder and arm normal again. Again He said no, my grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in your weakness.

A couple months ago I found I had a couple herniated disk in my lower back. For 2-3 weeks the pain was more than I experienced with either of my broken bones. For 3 weeks I could not sleep for more than an hour or 2 at night. Again I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. With the help of your prayers He did.. Although it may still bother me at times the intensity of the pain I was having went away.

 One thing that I learned through all of that experience is that when I was at my weakest and most trying moments and emptied myself of self and simply trusted in Christ, it was at those times in my life when I have been the strongest.

 It has always been in my times of personal weakness that I have experienced Christ strength the most. That His power is made perfect in my weakness as I give my weaknesses over to Him….

Mother Teresa once said, “*You will never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you've got."*

 How true that is!

 Once we realize that Jesus is all that we have it will allow us to rise above all the trials and tribulations and difficulties that we may have to face in this life so we can immerse ourselves in his amazing grace.

 Guideposts published the story of Jim Stovall, who became totally blind at the age of 29. While he still had partial vision, he volunteered at a school for the blind. He was assigned to help a four-year-old boy, blind and severely handicapped from birth. Stovall spent considerable time trying to convince the boy he could tie his own shoes or climb stairs in spite of his limitations.

 "No, I can't!" the boy insisted.

 "Yes, you can," Stovall replied.

 "No, I can't!" The verbal battle went on.

 Meanwhile, Stovall fought his own limitations. Because of his deteriorating vision, he decided he had to quit his college courses. On his way to withdraw from college, he decided to resign his volunteer position at the school for the blind as well.

 "It's just too tough," he explained. "I can't do it."

 "Yes, you can!" said a little voice beside him. It was the four-year-old who refused to tie his shoes.

 "No, I can't!" said Stovall with conviction.

 "Yes, you can!"

 Stovall realized if he didn't continue, the child would give up too. So Stovall stayed in school and graduated three-and-a-half years later. The same week he graduated, his little friend tied his shoes and climbed a flight of stairs.

 Scripture tells us "we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength."

 And all things work together to good for those who love the Lord.

Edward Mote’s great old Hymn, the Solid Rock, contains these words:

*When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.*

Do you realize that when we reside in His grace, when we allow God to work his strength in us, not just in our times of prosperity and health, but also in our times of trial and tribulation, when we stop our murmuring and complaining and simply rest and trust in the sufficiency of the Lord and give Him thanks in all things, we actually become an administrator of His grace into the world in which we live..

 And this world needs to see and experience the Grace of God more today then any other time in its history..

Church, we have been called to be administers of that Grace to our world.

**2 Cor. 5:20 (NIV)
20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

**1 Pet. 4:10 -11 (NIV)
10Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. 11If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

This morning, Have you allowed, are you allowing Gods grace to lift you above all the trials and tribulations of this life? Are you allowing Him to reveal His strength to you in your areas of weakness?

 Are you living your life as an ambassador, a representative of Christ Jesus, in the part of the world in which God has placed you?

 Are you faithfully administrating Gods grace that has been given you in its various forms so that others can see that grace and what it has done and is doing in your life and want that grace for themselves?

“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me---I once was lost but now am found-- was blind but now I see!”

 The solid rock

Amazing Grace