

**Bible Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10  
**Preached on:** Sunday, January 16, 2010

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Amen.

If you would please take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Ephesians, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter two, a familiar passage as we continue in our study of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Ephesians chapter two beginning in verse one and we will go through verse 10. Ephesians chapter two verses one through 10.

This is the Word of the Lord.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.<sup>1</sup>

Let us pray.

*Almighty God, gracious Father, we bow before you this hour thanking you, sitting in awe of you, Father, for what you have done and for, indeed, who you are. We praise you Father that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and that while we were dead in*

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10.

*our trespasses and sins you made us alive together with Christ. And I pray, Father, that this hour as we study the truths that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ alone to the glory of God the Father alone, Father, that Christ would be exalted and the truth of the gospel would be clear. And I pray, Father, that as the gospel goes forth that it would be powerful, Father. We know and we trust, Father, that your Word will not return void and it is in that promise that we place our trust. In Jesus' name we do pray. Amen.*

You may be seated.

Well, this morning we continue in our examination of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. We have now, to date, we have examined the doctrine of creation *creatio ex nihilo*, that God created out of nothing. We saw, of course, the virginal conception and the virgin birth. We have seen the truth of man's sinfulness, that we are in desperate need of a Savior. And this morning we come to the first part of salvation by grace alone.

This doctrine is central to who we are as a church. In fact, of course, grace is in the name of our church. But it is tragic today that grace has gotten a bad rap, I think, in that no longer do we see grace as in the broader Christian sense. No longer do we see grace as the Bible declares it to be.

The reformers, when they rose up, really, against the abuses within the Roman Catholic Church, they stood firm in their belief that we are saved by grace.

But here is the catch. The Roman Catholic Church taught then and teaches today that we are saved by grace. It also teaches that we are justified by faith, just as we do. The problem, though—and the reformers knew this, men like Martin Luther, John Calvin Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox, the great four reformers—they knew this. And they added one word which made all the difference and that was *sola* in Latin or alone.

In other words, we are not simply saved by grace, we are saved by grace alone. We are not simply justified by faith. We are justified by faith alone.

You see, the Roman Catholic Church was teaching and still teaches to this day that we are saved by grace plus the sacraments. In fact, you must do the sacraments in order to earn the merit of the saints who have gone before you in order that you may, again, essentially get out of purgatory and enter into the gates of heaven.

The reformers said no. That is not what Paul taught. That is not what Christ taught. That is not what the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures teach that our salvation from beginning to end is wholly a work of God's grace and God's grace alone.

That is what we are going to look at beginning this morning over the next couple of weeks. It is that we are saved by grace alone. And when we say we are saved, we are talking about all aspects of our salvation, going all the way back to the covenant of redemption from eternity past all the way to our glorification at the Second Coming of

Christ. It is all wholly a work of God's grace. This chain of redemption, if you will, this golden chain or this *ordo salutis*, order of salvation, we see several times in Scripture. And this *ordo salutis*, this order of salvation really is the start to finish of our salvation.

You see, today those of us in this room who sit here as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can properly say that we have been saved. But we can also properly say that we are being saved. And we can also properly say that we are not completely saved yet. It is a sure fact that we will be glorified one day. But the truth is, until our glorification, until we receive those glorified bodies, we are not fully saved from the presence of sin in our lives.

We see this, do we not, in Romans chapter eight verses 28 through 30.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.<sup>2</sup>

As you see here in this *ordo salutis*, this order of salvation, our salvation began really with the foreknowledge of God. And before that it began in a covenant of redemption that we are going to look at this morning, a covenant of redemption whereby God covenants, the three persons of the godhead covenant to redeem a people. And then we see the execution of that plan through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit.

But before we could understand salvation by grace alone, we must understand and we must fully embrace two absolutely essential truths. The first is the absolute sovereignty of God. If God is not absolutely sovereign, we will not fully understand grace as the Bible teaches it. And the second thing is we must understand the depravity of man. Man is totally depraved as we saw last week. Man, apart from Christ, is wholly unable to come to God. In fact, we don't want to come to God. It is completely antithetical to our nature to accept Christ. Why would we do that when we are looking out for our own good, being dead in our trespasses and sins?

And so it is essential that we recognize these two truths before we move forward. God is absolutely sovereign. Man is totally depraved, in desperate need of a Savior and can do nothing on our own.

Now this raises many questions, one of which is that would seem to make salvation arbitrary. God chooses some. He doesn't choose others. So that makes God capricious or arbitrary. And as we will see that is simply not the case. And so this morning we are going to look at three aspects of our salvation by grace. And I have done something this

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:28-30.

morning and in the coming weeks that I rarely do and that is use alliteration. Hopefully the alliteration will help us to understand it a little bit more. It happened to work out this way. The six P's, if you will, of salvation by grace.

The first one is the plan of grace. It all began with a plan. And we are going to look at that this morning.

Number two, the pursuit of God and God's grace.

Number three, the price of God's grace.

And then next week we will look at the particular and personal nature of God's grace.

Number five, the power of God's grace.

And, finally, the ultimate purpose of God's grace. What is the outcome of God's grace in the lives of his children?

And so we come to the first aspect of salvation by grace and that was the plan, where it all began. The plan of God's grace.

And we see in Ephesians chapter one verses three through four.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.<sup>3</sup>

Right here we see very clearly that there is a plan. There was a plan in eternity past in accordance with the counsel of God's will. And it was God's plan, indeed, to save a people.

But what is important that we know is that this plan was God's. It was God's plan. Salvation begins and ends with God. And because it is God's plan, the plan itself bears all of the characteristics of God's eternal nature.

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:3-11.

The first thing that we see about the plan is that it is perfect because God planned it. Who are we to protest against it? It is God's plan, therefore it is perfect.

The problem is because we are sinful we stand in judgment on perfection, do we not? Because we are sinful, we stand in judgment on perfection.

Why did they crucify Christ? The righteous Pharisees and Sadducees, why did they nail him to a cross? Because he was perfect, because he was righteous. And they were not. They were wicked. So are we apart from Christ there is no doubt. And the wicked man looks at righteousness and perfection with disdain and we stand in judgment to it.

This is why it should not surprise us that the modern evangelical church does not like the biblical plan of redemption because it doesn't seem fair to us. God doesn't ask our opinion. He doesn't ask us for advice. He doesn't ask us what we think. In fact, he acts independently, sovereignly and he calls us to be conformed to him and not the other way around.

Secondly, it is unchangeable and fixed.

God is unchangeable. This is one of the attributes of God that I would submit that most people dislike the most. Probably the number one time that I get horrible looks, I get angry faces, I get run out of a room often times even. That has happened to me one time that when I at least imply—and I believe it firmly—that we cannot change God, we cannot change his mind. This infuriates people. Because the way that we operate in this world is we operate often times through coercion and manipulation. We want something and we feel that it is best and therefore we will do everything in our nature, often times subtly, often times passively, we will do what we can to get our way. And we often times do this or I submit to you we always do this because we believe we know best. And often times when we plead with God in our prayers and the nature of our prayers, there is sometimes even manipulation if we get down to it. But God will not change. God does not change. But praise be to God he changes us. And this is the truth that we must declare. It is not something that is going to be readily embraced in most churches. But God will not change for us. In fact, he demands us to change. And his plan that he has set is not up to debate and it will not change. He, the three persons of the trinity, that is, covenanted together to save a people and God will accomplish what he plans.

Which brings us to our third point. Because it is God's plan, it is guaranteed to be successful. What God wills, God achieves. I cannot say that strongly enough. I have shared it with you before, but I think it is pertinent here that there was a popular book in 2001 and I have a copy on my shelf. I can't say that I have read it from cover to cover called *Wild at Heart*. Some of you may have read it. And it was wildly—no pun intended—wildly successful. And here in the book the author, John Eldridge, this is what he says.

“God is a person who takes immense risks. It is not the nature of God to limit his risks

and cover his bases. As with every relationship there is a certain amount of unpredictability. God's willingness to risk is just astounding. There is definitely something wild in the heart of God."

What is astounding is that he has created another gospel. That is what is astounding. God takes no risks. What God does is sure to come to pass. Yet, this felt very warm and fuzzy and the American population seemed to embrace it wholeheartedly. Bible studies were popping up left and right. I was invited to several of them because it feels that God is so relatable when we see that he takes risks because that is what we do. And we want something that is a little bit more like us so that we can relate to him. But that is not the God of the Scriptures. The God of the Scriptures takes no risks. The God of the Scriptures accomplishes absolutely everything that he sets out to do.

And finally, we note that the plan of redemption, that is the plan of the three persons of the trinity to redeem and save a people, it took place prior to creation. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

This is why I said last week and as radical as it sounds, God actually had to have ordained in some mysterious way the fall of Adam, because had Adam not fallen there would have been no need to send Christ. There would have been no need to save a people. But God knew and God even and in a serious way ordained the fall, not causing Adam to sin, but ordaining the fall so that he would send his Son, so that we would be chosen in Christ prior to the foundation of the world. And because it occurred prior to the foundation of the world, there were no other influences on God, no one giving him advice. It was God and that was it, the three persons of the trinity.

And this is another important truth that we must understand. God's decision to save a particular people was not arbitrary. You see, there was a reason. God knows the reasons. But God has not chosen to reveal to us why. And because God has not chosen to reveal to us his rationale for doing what he does, we stand in judgment of God calling him arbitrary and capricious. But God is not arbitrary. There is a reason why God chose whom he chose.

And, by the way, as we know, when we see ourselves as the Bible says we are, when we see ourselves as totally depraved, we realize that if God did what was fair we would all be condemned. And this is the problem where most people don't come down on. We don't see ourselves as wicked as we truly are apart from Christ. And we do not see God as absolutely sovereign. And, consequently, we don't see salvation as wholly a work of God's grace. But if we see the two, God is sovereign, man is sinful, then we see salvation wholly as a work of God's grace. For if God were fair, all of us would be condemned.

But praise be to God, God does not operate on a metric of fairness. He operates on a metric of justice and grace as we are going to see.

Daniel chapter four verse 35 says this.

“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he [that is God] does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”<sup>4</sup>

God will do as he chooses. God is absolutely free.

And then we read in Isaiah 46:10.

“Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’”<sup>5</sup>

My purpose. I will accomplish it. It is the counsel of God’s will. He is not arbitrary. There is a reason why he is doing what he is doing. We may know one day. We may not. But praise be to God he acts in a way that is consistent with who he is.

I love the passage in Genesis chapter 22. This is one of the great shadows, if you will, of the coming Christ. This is when God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, his one and only son Isaac on Mount Moriah. And Abraham obeys. And there is a very moving part, especially as a parent. There is a very moving part in this passage when they are going up just Abraham we see and his son and a servant. And they are going up to sacrifice and finally at one point Isaac is struck with a peculiar question and we read this in verse seven.

“And Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here am I, my son.’ He said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’”<sup>6</sup>

He is thinking to himself. We are going up to sacrifice. My father has said we are going to sacrifice, not realizing that God had called his father to sacrifice him. And the young boy says, “But where is the lamb? Where is the lamb?”

The late Presbyterian minister of the 10<sup>th</sup> Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, James Montgomery Boyce used to often times say to his congregation, “Where is the lamb?” going off of this, that that is the real question of the Scriptures. Where is the lamb? Where is the lamb?

And, of course, Christ is the Lamb. This was pointing to Christ.

But listen to the words of Abraham and these are what are so profound and we must listen carefully to what Abraham says to his Son.

Abraham said, “God will provide.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 4:35.

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 46:10.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 22:7.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 22:8.

But notice he doesn't stop there. He says, "...for himself."

"God will provide for himself."<sup>8</sup>

The implication being here God being the righteous, eternal, King, Creator and Judge, only God can provide for himself what he demands. You see, there is nothing that we can bring to God that is an acceptable sacrifice for our sin.

God must provide it for himself. This is precisely why he had to send his Son to provide for himself. This is precisely why Jesus had to be fully God because it is God providing for himself the necessary sacrifice required for true atonement of sin.

God will provide, brothers and sisters. And he will do so for himself. And this is exactly what the covenant of redemption insured, that the Father planned it and the Son voluntarily said, "Father, I shall go. I shall go."

It was something voluntary as we are going to see, but in that covenant of redemption God covenanted to provide for himself.

The second point that we see is that not only was it God's plan, but God had to execute the plan. And in so doing we see the pursuit of God's grace for his people.

You see, based on God's plan, the plan of redemption, the Father sent his Son on what I call a mission of grace, a mission of grace. We read about this, do we not, in Philippians chapter two verses five through 11, that the Son voluntarily emptied himself. The Son voluntarily emptied himself in that God did not empty him. God did not force him. The Son voluntarily took on human flesh, obeyed the will of the Father in order to fully execute the plan of redemption.

You see, we must not forget why the mission was, indeed, a mission of grace. Again, we were and we are sinful people apart from Christ. And there is nothing that we can do that pleases God. We see that we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

I love the passage and I preached on it in November in 2 Samuel about Mephibosheth. David seeks out Mephibosheth who was a descendant of Saul. David asked the question of one of his servants, "Is there not a descendant of Jonathan?" Of course, this was the best friend of David who dies at the end of 1 Samuel.

"Is there not a descendant of Jonathan that I can bless?" Because he loved Jonathan so dearly, that is, he loved the son of the king. I do believe there is a foreshadow there of the Son Jesus Christ.

But David loved the son of the king, Jonathan so much even after his death he sought out a man to bless because of Jonathan. And so he asked the question of his servant, "Is there not a man, a descendant of Jonathan that I can bless?"

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



And, of course, they brought to him Mephibosheth who was crippled, who was lame. But not only that, as a descendant of the previous dynasty in the ancient Near East he should have been killed. He had a mark of death on his head. In fact, in 2 Samuel 19 verse 28 Mephibosheth says this.

“For all my father’s house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king [that is, David], but you set your servant among those who eat at your table.”<sup>9</sup>

You see, we are children of wrath. That is what Ephesians chapter two calls us apart from Christ. We have the wrath of God resting on us. But even when we had the wrath of God resting on us, Christ came to save us.

And he didn’t just come to make it possible. He pursued us as we are going to see. He pursued us with an unrelenting love that originated from this covenant of redemption. You see, when we looked at what Paul says about this chain of redemption, this *ordo salutis*, this order of salvation, we see it all beginning back in the covenant of redemption when God foreknew his people.

We see in, again, Romans chapter eight:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.<sup>10</sup>

You see, it all began with the foreknowledge of God. But, once again, the problem we have is we translate foreknowledge as we think it should be. You see, most of us translate foreknowledge in this way and we interpret it this way, that God looked down through the tunnel of time and knows who is going to accept or reject or him. And it is those that he knows will accept him that he will eventually embrace.

But that has nothing to do with the biblical understanding of the Word “know.” You see, the word “know” biblically. You see, the word “know” biblically, in the Old Testament and the New carries with it a degree of intimacy that is only to be found in a family. The idea of knowing someone often times even we see with Adam and Eve, Adam knew his wife and they bore a son.

I can assure that is not just knowing about his wife. There is a level of intimacy there. It is a familial intimacy, an intimacy when you know someone. You know who they are. You know all about them.

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Samuel 19:28.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:29-30.

Again, it is the same type of knowledge you would have for a spouse or for children. You see, those God foreloved is literally what it means in the biblical sense. Those he had laced his love on from eternity past he pursued. He pursued in this grace.

You see, the pursuit of the Son, the incarnation, was borne out of God's foreknowledge of his people. It would be no different, brothers and sisters, no different than if you had a child, a child that was lost that you pursued. This is exactly what God did.

In fact, what is so absolutely important that we see is that because the plan of redemption was a plan of the Father, all of our salvation must be viewed in light of the fatherhood of God.

Our salvation, in its essence, is making us a member of God's family. That is what salvation is. It is God taking sinners who should be condemned and changing them so fundamentally that they can rightfully sit at his table as Mephibosheth did at David's table.

It is a miracle beyond human comprehension.

But this is what God did through his Son. Read with me John 6:37-39.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me.”<sup>11</sup>

Notice he calls him the Father. He doesn't just say God.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

Listen to this. This is that mission of grace whereby the Father sent the Son and the Son voluntarily went.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me.”<sup>13</sup>

We need to pay close attention to what comes next.

“That I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”<sup>14</sup>

And I ask. Who are those that the Father gave the Son, but those whom he foreknew, those who were a part of his family that he pursued with passion like we don't even know?

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<sup>11</sup> John 6:37.

<sup>12</sup> John 6:37-38.

<sup>13</sup> John 6:38-39.

<sup>14</sup> John 6:39.

Luke chapter 19 verse 10 says this.

“And Jesus said to him...”<sup>15</sup>

And this was the story of Zacchaeus.

“Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”<sup>16</sup>

The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. It is like a missile that has a very specific target. This is precisely what God did through his Son. It is tragic to hear the way people speak of salvation as though the plan of salvation was this nebulous possibility whereby even if possible that no one should have been saved, but that is ok. And God sends his Son to die on the cross a horrific death and we are just going to wait and see and let all things play out and hope enough people will embrace me when they see what an incredible God I am.

This is the gospel that many churches, most churches preach.

Brothers and sisters, it is not the gospel of the Scriptures. The gospel of the Scriptures is that like a missile—and I don't mean to be flippant. Christ came to seek out and save every single person that the Father gave him, every single person that the Father foreknew.

I love the parable on Luke 15:1-7. Listen to this.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”<sup>17</sup>

This was a condemnation of the Pharisees, by the way, for the Pharisees did not think that they needed God. In fact, they thought, we need God, but we can get there on our own.

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 19:9.

<sup>16</sup> Luke 19:9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 15:1-7.

Thank you for the help. God, helps me get there, but I can get there essentially on my own.

And Jesus is saying, “No. I pursue my people and my sheep know my voice.”

Notice. Who is the one doing the seeking here? It is not the sheep, by the way. It is not the sheep at all. It is the Lord, the great shepherd. He is the one who pursues the sheep until he finds it. He finds that sheep and he puts that sheep on his shoulders.

The sheep don't look for Christ. Christ looks for the sheep. Praise be to God this is the mission of grace.

God does, in fact, call us to love one another. In fact I often times see things on TV and you see them, too. Often times it seems like it is late night and you see these pictures, these horrific pictures of young children in different parts of the world, breaks your heart. And you have a love for them, do you not, a love for them. You see how sick they are. They are hungry. You want to do something and sometimes you may. Usually it is through financial giving or so on.

But I ask you this question. What if you were watching that show one day and you saw a picture of your own son or your own daughter on TV, not realizing they are not are in your home. And you found out for some strange reason you had one of your children who is in your family who is stuck overseas somewhere, maybe in a prison, maybe on a street starving. Is there anything you wouldn't do to go and get that child? Is there any expense that you would spare to go and pursue that child and bring that child home?

Dare I say that is precisely what the mission of grace was when Christ came. He came to save those that the Father had given him. He didn't just say, “You know what? I hope you choose me. Let me give you some benefits of choosing me. I am going to give you some negative aspects of not choosing me and then I am going to leave ultimately the decision up to you because you are the all wise one.”

This is... not only is it pathetic—and I use that word very seriously—it is not the gospel. It is not the gospel. God pursues us. God pursues us passionately.

I remember as a child in 1983, I remember it vividly, along with 38 million other Americans watching the tragic made for television movie *Adam*. I don't know if any of you have seen this. But I remember it. I mean it sticks in my mind vividly.

We know the story of Adam Walsh in Hollywood, Florida. In a Sears in Hollywood, Florida his mother—and in the movie it was played by Joe Beth Williams. I can see it like it was yesterday. And she leaves her son just for a moment playing a video game with some boys, just for a few minutes goes along another aisle and comes back and her son is not there.

Of course she panics. We know the end of the story and how tragic it is, but she looked everywhere. And that I what I remember the most is her panic. She would do anything to find her Son.

Let me ask you this. What if she knew exactly where her son was? What if she had all of the power to go and save her son? What would you think of her as a mother, Mrs. Walsh, if she chose not to go and get her son? What if her son decided that he really wanted to go with the person who would end up being his killer? And she said, “You know what? I would rather you come with me, but I am going to let you do what you would like to do”?

We would stand in judgment of her as a mother, would we not?

God is God. He is not like the mother of Adam Walsh in that he is impotent to do anything. He has all the power in the world and he will save his children.

I also remember in 2001 the story, you remember it well, probably, of Heather Mercer and Dana Currey. These were short term missionaries going to Afghanistan from Antioch Baptist Church in Waco. And they went over there and, of course, they were sharing the gospel. They were actually showing a Jesus film, the *Jesus* film in Kabul when the Taliban came in and arrested them and threw them in jail.

And one of the things that I remember the most—it has been almost 10 years ago—was that Heather Mercer’s father, John Mercer got on the first plane he could to Islamabad and got over there, not that he could do much of anything in the face of the Taliban, but that was his daughter. And I remember him being interviewed over and over and over again saying, “I am not leaving until I get my daughter back.”

The pursuit of him as a father, I can’t emphasize this strongly enough. This is what God has done. This is precisely what God has done. This is the grace, brothers and sisters, that saves us. God sending his Son, the Father sending his Son to pursue us and to breathe life into our bones.

Remember Ezekiel 37, the valley of dry bones? It says, “The hand of the LORD was upon me.”<sup>18</sup>

This is Christ speaking, by the way.

And he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ezekiel 37:1.

<sup>19</sup> Ezekiel 37:1-4.

This is the work of the Son of Man, brothers and sisters. This is the work of Christ, fulfilling exactly what the ancient of days had called him to do, breathing life into the dead bones of his children that they may be this vast and great army that God has called us to be.

And, thirdly, we see the price of God's grace.

Philippians 2:5-8.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself [emptied himself, made himself] nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>20</sup>

Last week we discussed the truth that the sin of Adam was imputed to us, was counted to belonging to us and, therefore, we were born guilty sinners who were born guilty because of Adam's sin in our stead.

But here is the interesting... there is three imputations. We are going to look at another one this morning. But our sin was then imputed to Christ.

So before we say it is not fair that Adam's sin was imputed to us, give word or give heed to the words of the truth that the sin, our sin, was imputed to Christ. And Christ paid the penalty for our sin. This is what he did when he came, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

And so when we see the cross of Christ we see the cost of God's grace. Grace always has a cost. In fact, in Romans eight it says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"<sup>21</sup>

And then we also read in 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul writes in chapter six, "For you were bought with a price."<sup>22</sup>

As a parent I find myself doing exactly the same thing that I know my parents did. And that is with my own children thinking to myself, if only they would appreciate the sacrifice. If only they would appreciate all that I have done for them, and wanting to pat myself on the back. All they do is take, take, take. Not ever appreciating what it took to give them all of the comforts and the like that they so enjoy.

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<sup>20</sup> Philippians 2:5-8.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 8:32.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20.

May we never forget, brothers and sisters, that we even more than this, infinitely more than this, were bought with a price.

I often hear people use the expression, “Well, why don’t you extend them grace?”

Because that feels very spiritual, doesn’t it? It feels very Christian. Biblical grace always is on the basis of a sacrifice. Biblical grace is always on the basis of sacrifice. If someone sins it is just so important, if someone sins, God doesn’t just wave a cosmic wand and say, “Because I am such a loving person I am going to extend you grace.” That would violate God’s justice. God’s grace says this. “Because I love you, I will put your sins on another and another will pay the full penalty, the fully penalty of your sin.”

This is so critical that we realize this. To say anything else is to be really guilty of what Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer called cheap grace, that is, grace without sacrifice. Grace, biblical grace is not just saying to someone, “I like you, I love you and do you know what? Don’t worry about it.”

Biblical grace demands that that a payment be made. The difference is someone else pays it for you. And this is why we must always remember, brothers and sisters, we were bought with a price. And when Christ pursued us, he pursued us knowing that it would lead to his death.

When we say in the Apostles’ Creed, “He descended into hell,” what we mean is not that on Saturday he went to hell. That is not what we mean. Some people preach that. But that is not what the Apostles’ Creed originally meant. It meant that when he was on the cross he suffered the infinite wrath of an infinitely holy God because of our sin and that is, in its essence, hell. Hell is suffering the penalty of your sins. And Christ as able to do it fully and completely because in his divine nature he was infinite. So he could suffer that infinite amount in a finite amount of time because he himself was fully God.

And so on that cross, during those six hours that one Friday long ago, Christ went to hell. And he went to hell for you and for me, suffering completely the infinite amount that we would have to suffer. That is the grace of God. And until we look at the cross and we see the gore of the cross, we will never know the true price of the grace that called us out.

And so, brothers and sisters, may we recognize the plan of God, the sovereign plan of God. May we not be guilty of what so many of our brethren, I believe, are. And that is to defend more violently the freedom of man over and against the freedom of God. May we defend the freedom of God, his rights, his freedom before we begin to try to defend the personal freedoms of fallen man.

I want to close with a passage from a book and I actually read this a couple of year ago. But in preparation for this I found it apropos, I suppose, for this morning’s sermon. I want to close here.

This is from David Clockfelter's book, *Sinner's in the Hands of a Good God*. He says this.

“Imagine for a moment a young boy who is at the center of his parents’ universe. They dote on him shamelessly, they give him every toy he asks for. They bend their rules to protect him from the consequences of his misbehavior. They tremble at his tantrums and they receive with adoring wonder every precocious pronouncement from his lips and every messy product of his creative genius. Within his own small world this boy is emperor.

“But now suppose that some courageous friend takes these parents aside and warns them that they must change their ways if they do not want to produce a monster. And suppose, further, that the parents are wise enough to listen to this advice. Things start changing around the house. Some demands are met with a firm no. Tantrums are ignored or at least not rewarded. Rules are made by the parents, not the child. And when he breaks the rules he suffers for it. Not only that, but the parents begin placing their marriage back at the center of the family life. They work at their relationship with one another. They make their decisions together and instead of assimilating themselves to their child’s mentality, they guide him to learn to live in their world.

“They do not love their son any less than before. They would gladly lay down their lives for him. But they have decided to live according to the truth that adults, not the children should be in charge of the family.

“At first the boy doesn’t like it. He has lost some of his power and he tries to wrest it back. He pouts and screams. He holds his breath till his face turns blue. His parents do not relent, however, and over time the boy actually becomes happier and more secure than ever was under the old arrangement. He is secretly relieved to live under adult made rules that cannot be changed by his whining. He experiences the satisfaction that comes from learning to wait and to work for the things he wants. He is not threatened by his parents’ love for one another. He is actually comforted by it. It makes him happy to know that his very life is a product of that love. Every hug his parents give one another makes him feel just that much more secure because he knows that their love for him is grounded in their love for one another. Most important, he sees that the world he can create for himself is small and pathetic, compared to the world his parents inhabit. And he learns to enjoy the process of growing up.”

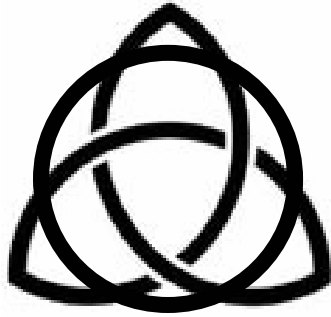
The analogy is far from perfect, but it suggests something of what I have experienced in accepting a biblical view of the world. Meditating on this view, I am reminded that the holy trinity existed in perfect love and joy before there was a universe, and that the creation, of which I am a part, is a product of that overflowing love and joy. I am reminded also that God’s love toward me flows from the joy he has in being God. Thus, his supreme commitment to himself and his own glory, far from threatening me or making me insignificant, confirms to me that I am eternally secure. God does not love



me because he needs me; he loves me because he has ordained my existence as an expression of his own glory.

Let us pray.

*Father, we praise you that you are God and that you are in control. We praise you for your sovereignty and your grace that pursued us with an unrelenting passion. Father, we praise you that you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to be our substitute so that your divine justice would remain satisfied. And, Father, we praise you beyond all measure that we can now call you Father and that we, like Mephibosheth at David's table are welcome to sit at your table as adopted sons of God. May we be committed to the true gospel of grace and proclaim it to a world, Father, that so desperately needs it. In Christ's name we do pray. Amen.*



# GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

BACK TO THE BASICS

*A Study of the Essentials of the Christian Faith*

Sermon Notes

**Grace Alone**

**Ephesians 2:1-10**

**January 16, 2011**

“<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

**Ephesians 2:1-10**

- This morning we begin an examination of the next doctrine in our list of “Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith.” The doctrine we will look at this morning is Salvation by Grace Alone.

1. The Doctrine of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*

2. The Bible is the Word of God

3. The Doctrine of the Trinity

4. The Doctrine of Original Sin

5. The Virginal Conception / Birth

6. The Two Natures of Christ

7. The Substitutionary / Vicarious Atonement of Jesus Christ

8. The Bodily Resurrection (and Ascension) of Jesus Christ

**9. Salvation By Grace Alone Through Faith Alone in Christ Alone**

10. Justification through Faith Alone in Christ Alone

- During the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church taught dogmatically that man was saved by grace and justified by faith. However, as men like Martin Luther and John Calvin realized, there was a fundamental aspect of this dogma (salvation by grace...justification by faith) that was missing.
  - The aspect that, according to the Reformers, was missing was the Latin word, *sola* – translated into English as “alone.”
  - In other words, the Reformers understood that teaching salvation by grace, without the emphasis on **grace alone**, was simply not the whole truth of the Gospel.
  - In fact, the Reformers began to teach what are now known as the “five solas of the Reformation”:
    - *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone)
    - *Solo Christo* (Christ Alone)
    - *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone)
    - *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone)
    - *Soli Deo Gloria* (To the Glory of God Alone)
- And so, this morning, as we begin our examination of the doctrine of salvation by grace, we do so with an emphasis on salvation by grace **alone**.
- Yet, we must also realize that when we speak of **salvation**, we are speaking of the whole of salvation – not just our conversion, but every aspect of what we call the “golden chain of salvation” or the *Ordo Salutis* (Order of Salvation).
- One of the clearest places in Scripture that we see this “Order of Salvation” is in **Romans 8:28-30**:

“<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

- Therefore, when we speak of salvation by grace alone, we are speaking of all of the following aspects of our salvation:
  - 1.) The Covenant of Redemption [Decrees of God]
  - 2.) Election
  - 3.) The Outward Gospel Call
  - 4.) Regeneration
  - 5.) Faith / Repentance
  - 6.) Justification
  - 7.) Adoption

- 8.) Sanctification
  - 9.) Perseverance
  - 10) Death
  - 11.) Glorification
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- As with all aspects of theology, central to a proper understanding of salvation is the embracing of God's absolute sovereignty within His Creation. He alone created all that exists out of nothing and sustains everything by His will alone. Consequently, this is His creation and He makes the rules. God is in control; we are not. This truth is the most *freeing* statement that we can ever embrace! Further, this is the truth that clearly emerges from the biblical testimony and one that guides every aspect of our lives.
- Therefore, before we can understand the nature of God's saving grace, we must be sure of two things: (1) God's absolute sovereignty; and (2) man's total depravity.
- Yet, many questions emerge when the emphasis, regarding our salvation, is placed upon God rather than man. Each of these questions/challenges is commonplace in the modern church that, far too often, seems opposed to the biblical truth of God's sovereign reign.
  - If God is sovereign in all things, including salvation then isn't man simply reduced to being a "robot?"
  - If God has already planned everything out, then I can act any way that I want. It does not matter, because if I am chosen, then I am chosen. If not, it does not really matter how I act either.
  - One prominent theologian has even stated that if God is absolutely sovereign in all things, including our salvation, then that would make him a "divine rapist," forcing his will on ours.
  - If God is sovereign in salvation, then His "choosing" of certain people for salvation is "arbitrary", "random."
- Also, there are many sayings that abound in the modern Church. Many of them sound great to many, they even "preach well", but tragically, they are fundamentally unbiblical. Some of them include:
  - "God has taken nine steps toward you; you must make one step towards him."
  - "You are drowning and God has thrown you a 'life-saver' in Jesus Christ; you must reach out and grab it, then you will be saved."
  - "In the courtroom of heaven, Christ has cast one vote for you; Satan has cast another; it is up to you to make the final, deciding vote."

- “You are on your deathbed, and dying of a fatal, terminal disease; then, in walks Christ, with the only antidote to save you. He places it on your lips. All you need to do is trust what he has given you and swallow the antidote, then you will live.”
- And so, over the next few weeks, we will turn to the pages of Scripture to analyze the nature of God’s saving grace which, alone, is the cause of our redemption through the work of Christ alone.

<p><b>I. Plan of Grace</b>  <b>II. Pursuit of God’s Grace</b>  <b>III. Price of God’s Grace</b></p>
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- IV. Particular and Personal Nature of God’s Grace  
V. Power of God’s Grace  
VI. Purpose of Grace
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<p><b>I. Plan of God’s Grace</b></p>
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- God’s work of grace in the life of each Christian began in eternity past – **with a plan.**

**Ephesians 1:3-4a:** “<sup>3</sup> Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as **he [the Father] chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love** <sup>5</sup> **he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,** <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, **according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ** <sup>10</sup> **as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.** <sup>11</sup> **In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,”** [emphasis added]

- Often times, when we consider God’s Plan of Salvation, we speak in terms of the **Covenant of Redemption**. Typically, when theologians refer to this Covenant, they speak in terms of an agreement between the Father and the Son, prior to creation, in eternity past. However, it certainly involves all three Persons of the Godhead. It is a truth that most certainly magnifies the whole of the Godhead, the Trinity.

“Theologians speak of...a covenant...among the members of the Trinity. This covenant they call the ‘covenant of redemption.’ It is an agreement among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the Son agreed to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of [the Law] on our behalf, and pay the penalty of sin, which we deserved.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

- Therefore, we must grasp when seeking to understand salvation that our salvation is part of a plan, and **that plan is God’s.**

- Consequently, when one looks to the Scriptures as the sole basis for understanding salvation, one thing is clear: **Salvation begins with God alone and finds its fulfillment in Him alone.**
- Since the plan of salvation is God’s plan, it bears the very **characteristics of Him** as well.
  - First of all, it is, like God Himself, **perfect.**
  - Secondly, however, since the plan of salvation is perfect, it is also **unchangeable and fixed.**

This is, quite possibly, the one attribute of God, and His plan of salvation, that makes the most professing Christians the most uncomfortable. Even as fully grown adults, many, professing Christians are more like young children when it comes to our relationship with God our Father. We truly believe that God should take into consideration, when He makes certain decisions, what *we* think. In other words, we believe that there are times when God’s decisions would actually be better if he took into consideration our perspective. We even believe that He would be more “fair” if He would negotiate with us. In fact, this is the problem that is seems most Christians have with God acting in a completely sovereign manner with respect to salvation: they say it is, in some way, “unfair.” **Yet, if God operated on the basis of “fairness”, then NO ONE would be saved!** Yet, herein lies the problem in our evangelical culture today – few people believe that, apart from Christ, we are as the Bible says we are.

Also, the idea that His decrees are fixed, unchangeable, and immovable, terrifies most of us. Yet, it should actually comfort us! For they are perfect! Tragically, though, what most Christians seem to want is an impotent, weak, and changeable god who can be manipulated based upon our ever-changing desires and motives. We, far too often, in our heart of hearts, believe that in God’s created order, everything should be, in some way, negotiable. This is why, when I teach Bible studies in organizations outside this church, one of the most controversial statements that I can make is, “We cannot change God’s mind.” Yet, this truth applies to all aspect of God [because He and His decrees are perfect, and consequently, do not change].

Once more, we are often like children who think we know better what we need than our parents. [Yet, consider the “gap” (in terms of intelligence, wisdom, and maturity) between a parent and a child and compare that to the infinite “gap” between even a fully-grown adult Christian and God Himself.] However, to expect God to conform to what *we* think He should do, is as foolish [or, technically even more foolish] as a piece of clay saying to the potter, “Why did you make me this way?” [Romans 9:19-21] Again, God’s immutability [unchangeableness] in all His decrees should be the source of great comfort for all His people!

- Thirdly, since salvation is God’s plan, it is **guaranteed to be successful**, for God cannot fail – it is fundamentally against His nature.

One of the main reasons for this truth is because God is not bound by anything, except His own very nature [that is, the only thing He *cannot do* is violate His own nature]. He is not bound by time and space, for He is eternal. **HE IS** past, present, and future. Again, however, this view,

although it sounds good, when the “rubber meets the road,” is not comfortable to many professing believers. For example, in a wildly popular book published in 2001, which has sold over 500,000 copies, author John Eldridge writes:

“God is a person who takes immense risks...It’s not the nature of God to limit His risks and cover His basis...As with every relationship, there’s a certain amount of unpredictability. God’s willingness to risk is just astounding. There is definitely something wild in the heart of God.” *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*

Statements like this are so attractive, and so “heart-warming” to so many people, because they make God more “like us.” They make God easier to relate to. Yet, what they do is actually create a completely different god...one that is not biblical or worthy of worship or praise.

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- The next point that we must understand with regard to God’s plan of salvation is that it occurred **prior to creation**. That is to say, it is an eternal plan, originating outside of the limited realm of time and space.
    - Furthermore, since God’s plan of salvation originated prior to creation, the only Being in existence was God. Therefore, the Plan of salvation was **purely God’s plan** – with no other influence.
    - The next point that is clear from the testimony of Scripture is that God’s plan of salvation was based “**on the counsel of His will**.” What is clear from this is that “the counsel” of God’s will necessitates a plurality of persons. It necessitates the Trinity. In other words, **biblical salvation is impossible apart from the reality of the Trinity. Thus, in eternity past, the three Persons of the Godhead “counseled” together, in order to plan out the salvation of God’s people** (We will examine this more closely in the coming weeks).

“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,  
But **He does according to His will in the host of heaven**  
And among the inhabitants of earth;  
And no one can ward off His hand  
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” **Daniel 4:35** [emphasis added]

“...**declaring the end from the beginning**  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, ‘**My counsel shall stand,**  
**and I will accomplish all my purpose,**’” **Isaiah 46:10** [emphasis added]

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- One of the attacks against God’s sovereign election is that His choices seem arbitrary, capricious, or random. In other words, He chooses some to salvation [arbitrarily]; yet, passes over others [arbitrarily]. However, it is impossible for God to act in an arbitrary manner, for such is contrary to His nature.

- **Yet, there is a reason why God planned salvation in the manner He did. There is a reason why God graciously chose some to salvation – we simply do not know why.**
- Again, the Scriptures state that God’s decisions in salvation are **based on the counsel of His will**. Thus, the reason why God has acted in the manner He has is hidden to us, for it is based on the counsel of the Persons of the Trinity in eternity past. This should not surprise us, though. For, the Scriptures clearly state that His ways are higher than ours, and His thoughts higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9).
- Once again, we are often like children who believe that God, in some way owes us an explanation, in a manner that makes sense to us, why He acts the way He does. Yet, He calls us simply to trust Him, knowing that He is God, and we are not. Ultimately, the plan of salvation is for God’s glory alone. When one ultimately realizes that salvation is wholly a work of God’s grace, then he is left to simply glorify God for what **He** alone has done.

**Genesis 22:1-8:** “<sup>1</sup>After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here am I.’ <sup>2</sup>He said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ <sup>3</sup>So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup>On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. <sup>5</sup>Then Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.’ <sup>6</sup>And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. <sup>7</sup>And Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here am I, my son.’ He said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ <sup>8</sup>Abraham said, ‘**God will provide for himself** the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’ So they went both of them together.” [emphasis added]

- In this well-known passage, Abraham takes his son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah to offer him up as a burnt offering, in accordance with the command of the Lord.
- Yet, this passage exists as one of the great “shadows” of Christ in the Old Testament. But, specifically, in Verse 8, we read a powerful statement that “God will provided **for Himself**” the necessary offering.
- In other words, only God can provide what He demands. Nothing else will do. This truth further emphasize the work of **God alone** in our salvation. For salvation involves God’s provision **for Himself** on our behalf.

## II. Pursuit of God’s Grace

- Based on God’s Plan, the Covenant of Redemption, the Father sent His Son on a Mission – a Mission to save His people. But the other truth is that the Son voluntarily chose to go on this “Mission of Grace” (Philippians 2:5-11).



- Yet, we must not forget why this Mission was one of “**Grace**”: **because we all deserved God’s righteous and eternal judgment.**
- Recall **Ephesians 2:1-3, 5:**

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...and were by nature children of wrath...But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, make us alive together in Christ...”

- Remember as well, the story of Mephibosheth, when David sought the crippled boy out in order to bless Him. In this account, Mephibosheth, in accordance with the customs of the day, should have been killed.

2 Samuel 19:28: “For all my father’s house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table.”

- But like David in 2 Samuel, Christ pursued all of those the Father had given Him. Not only this, but the Pursuit of Grace, was based upon God’s foreknowledge. That is, the Father sent Christ to save “those whom He foreknew.”

“<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” **Romans 8:28-30**

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- We, God’s children, are those whom God “foreknew.”
  - In his commentary of **Romans 8:28-30**, Dr. Douglas Moo, of Wheaton College, states, “In the six occurrences [of the Greek word for *foreknow* (*ginosko*, γινωσκω), in the New Testament, only two mean “know beforehand” (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17); the three others besides the occurrence in the text (Romans 8:29), all of which have God as their subject, mean not “know before” – in the sense of intellectual knowledge, or cognition – but “enter into relationship with before” or “choose, or determine before” (Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2).”
  - Dr. Moo continues, “That the verb here contains this peculiarly biblical sense of ‘know’ is suggested by the fact that it has a simple personal object. Paul does not say that God knew anything about us but that He knew *us*, and this is reminiscent of the Old Testament sense of know” as well.
  - As we have seen before, the biblical idea of “foreknowing” is equivalent to “fore-loving.” To “foreknow” someone, in a biblical context, is not to simply know about someone or

simply know that the individual exists. Rather, it means to fore-love, and then to pursue based on that foreknowledge.

- Praise be to God that **He foreknew us**, and on this basis **He pursued us!**

- **The idea is that God loved us prior to us knowing and loving Him...** And on the basis of this foreknowledge and fore-love, God pursues us, His children. **Because the plan of redemption was functionally the plan of the Father, all of our salvation must be viewed in light of the Fatherhood of God.**

**John 6:37-39:** “<sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup>And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

- Again, “all that the Father gives me” are those whom He “foreknew.”
- The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, was part of a “rescue mission” by the Father, who sent His Son to fulfill the plan. And the Son was perfectly successful.

**Luke 19:10:** “<sup>9</sup>And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**’” [emphasis added]

**Luke 15:1-7:** “<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ <sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ <sup>7</sup>Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

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- God calls each of us to love one another, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Yet, even when we love one another, there is a particular love we have for certain people. For example, I as often share, the love I have for Kimberly and my four children is unique to them as my family members [as so it is with everyone].
  - I can also say that I hear of children around the world suffering and hungry, and out of love, I desire to do something for them, and sometimes I do (typically financially). But, imagine if I knew that Kimberly or one of my four children (Isabella, Elijah, Atticus, or Scarlett Paige) were lost or held captive in a foreign country. I can assure you, there is nothing I would not do – no expense I would spare – to go and find our children. Every parent would do so.

- Yet, God our Father, who “foreknew” us, is no different with respect to the “particular” love He has for those whom He “foreknew.” We are His children, and unlike us, He is all powerful. Therefore, when He planned Redemption, it was guaranteed to succeed.
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- As a child in 1983, I vividly remember the first – and only – time I saw the movie *Adam*, the film which told the tragic true story of the kidnapping and murder of Adam Walsh. And what I remember the most was the scene when Adam’s mother, Reve’, lost him in the Sears store in Hollywood, Florida. What I remember about the scene was the frantic nature of Adam’s mother, played by JoBeth Williams, as she helplessly searched for her lost son. Yet, she was unsuccessful.
  - Yet, if you hear the way so many Christians speak of God with respect to our salvation, His role, and His ability is tragically similar to that of Mrs. Walsh searching for her son. That is, God calls for us, He even searches for us, but ultimately, it is up to us to hear His voice, and come to Him. Tragically, in the case of Adam, even if he had heard his mother’s voice, there was nothing he could do. In terms of our salvation, we were no different. In fact, our situation was even worse. For, apart from a sovereign and miraculous work of God, we could not even hear the voice of our Father, for we were already spiritually dead.
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- We all probably remember the two young women, Heather Mercer and Dayna Curry, who were sharing the Gospel in Afghanistan in 2001, when they were arrested. On August 3, 2001, the Taliban arrested the two women as they shared the Gospel and showed the “Jesus film” in a private home in Kabul.
  - One of the things I remember the most was the determination of Heather Mercer’s father, John Mercer, as he traveled to Afghanistan, determined to bring his daughter home. Yet, he was quite powerless in the face of the Taliban regime.
  - However, on November 15, 2001, a Special Forces unit rescued Mercer and Curry from the Afghan prison, freeing them to come back home to the United States.
  - So it was with us. Yet, unlike John Mercer, our Heavenly Father, as absolutely sovereign and omnipotent. Unlike Mercer, nothing will thwart the plans and works of God the Father. And, like the Special Forces unit sent to rescue Curry and Mercer, the Father sent His Son to save us.
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- Therefore, we must view our salvation in terms of the Father’s pursuit of us through His Son (and the Holy Spirit). The Father sent His Son to save His children.

“<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>And he led me around among them,

and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.  
<sup>3</sup>And he said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ And I answered, ‘O Lord GOD, you know.’  
<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’”  
Ezekiel 37:1-4

- In this passage, we gain a glimpse of the sending of the Son by the Father (“Prophesy over these bones...”). And just as the scene in Ezekiel 37, Christ’s work was perfectly successful.

### III. Price of God’s Grace

- Finally, this morning, we see that the price of God’s grace was nothing short of the sacrifice of His only Son.

**Philippians 2:5-8:** “<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

- God’s pursuit of His children involved an infinite sacrifice. There was a price that had to be paid in order for God’s justice to be satisfied, and God’s nature to remain unchanged and eternal.
- Last week, we discussed the **imputation of Adam’s sin to us**. But, in the crucifixion, **our sin was imputed to Christ**. And because of this, Jesus Christ suffered the eternal wrath of the Father in our place, as our substitute.
  - Furthermore, because Christ fully exhausted the wrath of God in our place, “there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” There is no wrath remaining for our sins.
  - It is important to remember that the wrath that was due our sins was infinite in degree. Yet, because Christ was fully God, and infinite in His divine nature, He could fully exhaust the infinite wrath of God the Father in a finite amount of time.
  - True grace is costly! To preach salvation without sacrifice is another gospel and what Martin Luther and Deitrich Bonhoeffer called, “cheap grace.”

- **Therefore, when we behold Christ on the cross, we realize that the grace by which we are saved came at a price.**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”  
Romans 8:32

<sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price.” 1 Corinthians 6:20

- I often hear people say, “I am going to extend you grace...” And we often ask this of other, “Would you please give me some grace.”
- Yet, **biblical grace does not involve the “waving” of a “magic cosmic wand” that wipes the slate clean. God does not forgive us simply because He is a kind, gentle grandfather-figure.**
- Biblical grace is the pursuit of God the Father on the basis of His plan of redemption and the sacrificial work of Christ. Without the crucifixion of our Lord, there is no saving grace.

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- Every parent in every generation laments about the ungrateful spirit of his or her child(ren) (or at least it seems that way).
    - That is, parents rarely believe that their children fully appreciate the sacrifice and hard work that it takes to maintain a certain lifestyle of level of comfort.
    - How much more offensive is it in the face of God our Father, when we “cheapen” the grace that saves us by ignoring the price of that grace – that is, the Son “descending into hell” (NOTE: Christ endured “hell” on the cross. When we speak of this in the Apostles’ Creed, we are not affirming that Christ went to the location of hell, but, rather, that He endured the infinite wrath of God towards all of the sins of all the Father gave Him. This, therefore, is hell – the infinite wrath of the Father.).

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- **And so we see that the grace that called us from life to death was the result of God’s plan of redemption from eternity past.**
  - In conclusion, I have personally read few, if any analogies that better describe God’s sovereign work in salvation better than this one, again, from David Clotfelter’s *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God*:

### **The Adults are in Charge!**

“Imagine for a moment a young boy who is the center of his parents’ universe. They dote on him shamelessly: they give him every toy he asks for, they bend their rules to protect him from the consequences of his misbehavior, they tremble at his tantrums, and they receive with adoring wonder every precocious pronouncement from his lips and every messy product of his creative genius. Within his own small world, this boy is emperor.

But now suppose that some courageous friend takes these parents aside and warns them that they must change their ways if they do not want to produce a monster, and suppose further that the parents are wise enough to listen to this advice. Things start changing around the house. Some demands are met with a firm “No!” Tantrums are ignored, or at least not rewarded. Rules are

made by the parents, not the child, and when he breaks the rules, he suffers for it. Not only that but the parents begin placing their marriage back at the center of family life: They work at their relationship with one another; they make their decisions together, and instead of assimilating themselves to their child's mentality, they guide him to learn to live in their world.

They do not love their son any less than before. They would gladly lay down their lives for him. But, they have decided to live according to the truth that the adults, not the children, should be in charge of the family. At first the boy doesn't like it. He has lost some of his power and he tries to wrest it back. He pouts and screams. He holds his breath till his face turns blue. His parents do not relent, however, and over time the boy actually becomes happier and more secure than he ever was under the old arrangement.

He is secretly relieved to live under adult-made rules that cannot be changed by his whining. He experiences the satisfaction that comes from learning to wait and to work for the things he wants. He is not threatened by his parents love for one another; he is comforted by it. It makes him happy to know that his very life is a product of that love. Every hug his parents give one another makes him feel just that much more secure, because he know that their love for him is grounded in their love for one another. Most important, he sees that the world he can create for himself is small and pathetic compared to the world his parents inhabit, and he learns to enjoy the process of growing up.

The analogy is far from perfect, but it suggests something of what I have experienced in accepting [a biblical view] of the world. Meditating on this view, I am reminded that the Holy Trinity existed in perfect love and joy before there was a universe, and that the creation, of which I am a part, is a product of that overflowing love and joy. I am reminded also that God's love toward me flows from the joy He has in being God. Thus, His supreme commitment to Himself and His own glory, far from threatening me or making me insignificant, confirms to me that I am eternally secure. God does not love me because He needs me; He loves me because He has ordained my existence as an expression of His own glory." pp. 251-252