

Gracious Regeneration | Man's Need for Grace [WEEK2]

WHERE IS THE LOVE?

We are spending five-weeks studying the grace of God in salvation in the letter to the Ephesians. **Last week we read that GOD PLANNED for grace before the foundation of the world.** He planned to create a people, for those all of those people to rebel and fall into sin, to rescue a chosen people by making them the object of His grace. And planned to accomplish this by sending His Son to die the death and live the life they should have. But grace did not end there. He planned to adopt them. He planned to lovingly conform them into the image of His son. He planned to one day restore those people to perfection and spend eternity with them—**ALL for the purpose of declaring His glory, magnifying His name, and displaying His character.**

The first seven verses of Revelation chapter 2 are also addressed to Ephesus—where Jesus commends the church for having good doctrine but condemns them for their loss of love. SOBER US. Honestly, the doctrines of grace don't always feel loving, but the word love is used 14xs in the book of Ephesians. **IN LOVE he predestined us...because of the great love with which he loved us he saves.** Though it doesn't "feel" loving when we start talking about God choosing to show grace to some and not others—the problem is that we want to define God's love according to our view, not the Bible. You cannot separate God's love from His holiness, His justice, or His wrath. **God intends to display his FULL NAME—first, middle, and last. If God were only just and wrathful, all of creation would be rightly destroyed. But he is loving, merciful, and gracious—perfectly so—at the same time.**

Our series is not designed to elevate the GRACE of God exclusively, but explicitly. It's God's grace that saves us. It is God's grace changes us. It is God's grace that keeps us. **It's all God's grace.** There's great comfort in God's sovereignty. If all of life is dependent upon my effort or faith, then we have much to fear. But if it is completely dependent upon a holy, powerful God who loves, a God moves first and doesn't wait for me to move, then there's much to rejoice.

WHY MUST GOD ACT FIRST? | REDEMPTION

We only wonder why God has to elect when we misunderstand the DOCTRINE OF SIN.

- **The word "Redemption"** | ⁷ **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace**
- **The meaning of redemption** | The word redemption is about payment of a ransom for the release of captives. Redemption is a deliverance from slavery.
- **The story of Redemption/Exodus** | The foundational picture of redemption is the Exodus from Egypt (enslaved, overworked, kids are being slaughtered...)

WHAT MAKES GRACE NECESSARY? | SINFULNESS OF SIN

All men have are sinful by nature and choice. Romans 8.12 ¹² **Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—**

All men are only and always sinning...they cannot please God. ⁵ **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.** Psalm 51.5; Men cannot please God. Romans 8.8 ⁸ **Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**

All men are unable to choose God | Men are broken. Beyond self-help. Men cannot do good. Men cannot understand good. Men cannot desire good. Romans 3.11-12 **"None is righteous, no, not one; no**

one understands; **no one seeks for God**. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

All men are unwilling to choose God | loyal to Satan, enslaved by their flesh, and in love with the world. John 3.19 ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and **people [NOT SOME] loved the darkness** rather than the light because their works were evil. Men love their sin more than God. Men love themselves more than God. Men **love others** more than God. Men love creation more than God.

Man is totally sinful but not absolutely sinful | Men do not do the most evil possible. Even Hitler helped an old Lady. Men do what we called “good”, but they never do it in order to please or honor God. Motivation for doing good is always glory to self or others, not God—anything that does not proceed from faith is sin (Romans 14.23)

HOW DOES THE BIBLE DESCRIBE WHAT SIN HAS DONE TO US?

1. Men are **dead** (Ephesians 2) | **And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² 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—**
2. Men are **children of wrath** | **and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**
3. Men are **enslaved** (Romans 6) | **⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.**
4. Men are **blind** (2Cor 4) | **³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**
5. Men are **natural** (1Cor 2) | **¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**
6. Men are **hostile enemies** (Rom 5/8.7) **¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**
7. Men are **false worshippers** (Rom 1) | **²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

What has sin done to us? There are only two options. **Sin has either BRUISED, REALLY HURT, or TOTALLY DESTROYED all aspects of life.** The difference is this. Either man has fallen off a building, been bruised, broken, and hurt—but he is able to still cry out and respond. . Or, a man has fallen and is a pile of blood and guts splattered on the sidewalk unable to bubble up a cry for help because he is dead (Sin has either hindered made it difficult for a man to swim, to the point of nearing drowning. Or, you are a man at the bottom of the ocean with lungs full of water—fish food.)

ARE MEN FREE TO CHOOSE?

Yes, men freely choose whatever their hearts desire. **The question is, what do sinful men desire? What is the GOVERNING desire of their heart? [ABS VS. ICE CREAM- J.Lewis]**

- They are free to choose everything but God because their hearts do not desire him.
- Men are not free to trust Jesus because men are enslaved...with joy (prisoners in a burning prison who want to be there).
- **A man just not FREELY decide to be alive, to be blind, to understand spiritual things, to no longer be enslaved, to stop fighting God, to worship what He hates (BUT IF FEELS LIKE IT....)**

WHAT MUST HAPPEN FOR MAN TO RESPOND? Before a dead man can respond, something must happen to give him the ability: **John 3.3-8** ³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

HOW IS SOMEONE BORN AGAIN? | CALLING Romans 8.30 ³⁰ those whom he predestined he also called

- THERE IS AN INTERNAL OPERATION OF THE SOUL by the SPIRIT...Jesus calls you by name (revealing himself to you) SO THAT you will call upon his. God calls to you through His word by His SPIRIT.
- THE INWARD CALL works together with the EXTERNAL proclamation of the word: **Romans 10.13-14** ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **We preach. God saves.** God has decided that his mechanism for calling is through His Word. But not everyone who hears the Word of God believes...right? Acts 13.44-48 ⁴⁴The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' " ⁴⁸And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.
- Why doesn't he call everyone? Why doesn't he call everyone at the same time or in the same way? Both are answered simply by **his purpose for his glory**. He doesn't really reveal why he doesn't call everyone though he expresses that it is his desire to do so. **We can imagine that his refusal to do so is just and glorifies his justice and displays his Holiness. WHY DOES HE CALL ANYONE? Grace.**
- He does not do it at the same time because he intends to save people in different ways. And many times he allows people to pursue their own glory and indulge in their own sin and experience their own darkness so that he can save them from it AND send them back into it to save those like them.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ARE CALLED? | REGENERATION

Ephesians 2.1-9 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² 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— ³ 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. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the

immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **MADE ALIVE, we call this REGENERATION, which proceeds salvation - (LAZARUS JOHN 11)**

God gracious gives you a new heart, with new desires, new perceptions, a new attitude toward God, a new understanding of self, a new disposition toward sin, and new love for others. *Galatians 5.16-17* ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. THERE IS A WAR where there was not one before.

IS THIS JUST AN OFFER OF FREEDOM?

It is FREEDOM. GOD MAKES US ALIVE SO THAT WE CAN RESPOND TO HIS CALL God did not offer the Israelites freedom by working hard, he secured it. God secured our freedom through ransoming his Son as payment for our liberation. He did not pay Satan, he paid himself—the debt was owed to Him—His wrath was satisfied. By grace, in love, he satisfied his own justice and unleashed his wrath upon His son so that I could be FREE from ALL my captivity.

Our freedom comes through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. **FAITH IS ITSELF THE GIFT.** *Ezekiel 11.19-20* And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God

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| 1. From dead to alive | 5. From natural to spiritual |
| 2. From children of wrath to children of love | 6. From enemies to friends |
| 3. From slaves to free | 7. From false worshippers who hate God to true worshippers who love Him |
| 4. From blind men to those who see | |

WHAT A BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SIN DOES? | GRACE

What makes God's grace so amazing and his love so gracious, is just how evil and unloving we actually are? **The Cross declares God's holiness/our sinfulness at the same time that it declares God's great love for us.**

1. **This explains the trouble in the world.** This is world is broken because it hates God. The problem of sin is internal, not external. The only solution is by the Spirit, not education, legislation, or violence. **THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE WORLD IS GRACE—a new heart. WE HOPE IN GRACE.**
2. **This reveals my own need for rescue.** I STILL NEED GRACE. The doctrine of sin reveals that it is “ok, to not be ok”. It can be a church honest about our sins if we are a church that celebrates the riches of God's grace. God's gracious love is only amazing when we see just how unlovable we were...and are. We need to be Gospel community where it's safe to confess our sin with each other. We need to be a Gospel community where we love each other enough not to let us stay that way. Gatherings sinners with other sinners doesn't begin to fix us in any sort of real and lasting way unless those same sinners are pointing each other to the riches of God's grace in Christ. **WE LIVE GRACE**
3. **Seeing the sinfulness of our sin, the light of God's grace, creates new desire.** When you proclaim the riches of God's grace people are saved. If you desire to ask God for help, that is God's spirit making your heart alive. Respond. Repent. Believe. **GRACE STILL AT WORK. WE PREACH GRACE.**