

**Intro | REDEEMED by the Gospel of Grace**

This is part four of our five week series entitled GRACE. GRACIOUS RESOLUTION, REGENERATION, RECLAMATION, RENOVATION, and RESTORATION. Essentially, we're going deep on the first 14 verses of Ephesians, in an effort to explore e exploring the mystery of God's grace from before the world began until after the world ceases to exist as we know it.

It is helpful to remember that the experience of the people of Israel in the Old Testament is a picture of our own redemption and life with God. God **redeemed** His people from slavery and brought them out of Egypt to make them into worshippers. **Redemption marked their identification as God's people, but their UNION with God didn't automatically make them a holy people; so he gave them the law.** The law not only served as a guide to godliness, it provided a means to deal with their ungodliness—the GRACIOUS substitutionary atonement of animals. Through their obedience to God's law (a gift of grace), they were deemed forgiven and righteousness **so as to COMMUNE with God.**

In a similar way, through Jesus life-death-and resurrection, God lovingly acts to save sinners, to love his enemies, to die for the ungodly. THROUGH THE SACRIFICE of Jesus, God forgives the sins of his children past, present, and future. He does not ignore, excuse, or minimize their adoption files full of rebellion, rather, he pays the ultimate price to redeem them, and give them a sinless performance record. Through Jesus God makes us alive, and declares us both innocent and righteous. **By grace, we go from fear-filled orphans to hope-filled sons. This is God's ACT of Grace.** Ephesians 2.8-9 <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. **The grace of the cross secures our UNION with God.**

**The righteousness we have received is Jesus' not our own.** The grace of God doesn't stop at the cross—He is still working out his purposes for us. **But, having made us Holy in POSITION, God is still making us Holy in PRACTICE.** For centuries, theologians have distinguished between JUSTIFICATION—the one-time **definitive declaration that we are righteous** and SANCTIFICATION, the ongoing process of **becoming righteous**. The Scriptures teach that we are set apart by **God's act of grace**, AND we are being set apart by **God's work of grace**. This is a life-long process of becoming who we NOW are in Christ—a *progressive* process of becoming Holy.

**RENOVATED by the Gospel of Grace**

In other words, we are **redeemed works in progress**. AMEN? <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. The same GRACE that transforms us is the same GRACE that reforms us. In other words, by grace, God takes us through a **perpetual RENOVATION process that ends either in our death or his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming**. As sinners we were an old abandoned meth house destroyed by squatters. Through the death and resurrection Jesus, there ownership has changed and the new caretaker intends to not only clean it but fill it. He not only wants to make it livable, more than that, he wants to make it beautiful. **Why? In order to increase three things: grace, gratitude, and glory to God. We are redeemed works in progress.**

There is, however, is an inescapable tension between justification and sanctification; between our position of holiness and our practice of holiness; between faith and works. How does it all happen? It is all God? Is it all me? There are two ditches on each side of the road. In one ditch is the "Let go and let God" people who believe they have ZERO responsibility to do anything regarding their behavior—I prayed the

prayer—I'm saved...God will do the rest magically. On the other side of the ditch are those people who believe "It is all up to me" and they have 100% responsibility to change their thoughts, feelings, and behavior which results in a pendulum swing between pride and despair depending on how well they do. The question becomes, where does God's sovereignty start and man's responsibility begin when it comes to **change?**

**The Scriptures present us with a paradox of sorts:** *Philippians 2.12-13* <sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>**for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.** We are charged to work OUT (not for) our salvation FOR it is God who works in you to work for Him. By grace, God saves us to be holy—to love sin less and love God more. And by grace, God empowers us to work toward holiness he calls us to. **This work of grace, sanctification, is NOT about improving our UNION with God, but our COMMUNION with Him.** Improving our Communion with God requires we understand right MOTIVATION, MODEL, and MEANS for Gospel Renovation.

### **The MOTIVATION for sanctification (FATHER)**

The motivation for our sanctification is the finished work of the Father—the act of grace—our justification. Our sanctification is based on our justification. *2Peter 1.3-11* <sup>3</sup>His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. **FOR THIS REASON MAKE EVERY EFFORT to supplement your faith** with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to **CONFIRM YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION**, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our growth in godliness begins with believing the gospel. The Scriptures teach that we are set apart by **God's act of grace**. There is a positional or definitive sanctification that has taken place. In Christ, we are declared, counted or reckoned to be righteous when God imputes the righteousness of Christ (an "alien righteousness") to our account. Christ's righteousness ascribed to the redeemed individual without their personal merit. We are declared righteous in Christ, it is imputed to us -- it is counted as ours ... not infused in us. **We are counted righteous in God's eyes because of Christ.**

**As I said, this does not make us automatically righteous in ourselves. Reformer Martin Luther famously described Christians as "simultaneously saint and sinner."** Like Israel who was challenged time and time again to "remember" their redemption from Israel. We are called to remember the Father's love as demonstrated at the cross, the place where we went from orphans to sons. **The Father redeems us from slavery. The Father forgives our sin. The Father imputes us with righteousness. The Father adopts us as His children.** Our motivation to obey is NOT to be accepted (or not rejected), we are accepted and will never be rejected. FOR THIS REASON, because we are accepted, we obey. Our relationship with God has gone from BOSS/EMPLOYEE to FATHER/SON and, therefore, his commands and

warnings are viewed as loving instructions from a loving Father. **We believe Jesus when he says:** <sup>9</sup> *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.* <sup>10</sup> *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* <sup>11</sup> *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15.9-11).* Our motivation for obedience is not to impress the Father, but to enjoy Him.

### **The MODEL for Sanctification (SON)**

BECAUSE we are saved by the FATHER, we make every effort to “supplement our faith with virtue”. In other words, we obey. But what is God's ultimate goal in our sanctification? *2Corinthians 3.17-18* <sup>17</sup> *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* <sup>18</sup> *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* The aim of our effort is not to simply become moral; the goal of our sanctification **is to renovate the image of God which has been broken. And the model image for our sanctification is the exact imprint of God Himself—God intends to make us look more like Jesus Christ in attitude and action.**

**This is a gospel-empowered renovation.** This is more than a little paint and washing the windows. In order to look like Jesus there will be ADDITIONS, SUBTRACTIONS, and MODIFICATIONS. **We are, individually and corporately, a redeemed work in progress. It would be appropriate to put an UNDER CONSTRUCTION sign on our front door.** As a work in progress, we are not complete. That is not the same as saying we are deficient, because God's Spirit has given us all of the materials are there to complete us. **It does mean, however, that our faith has unfinished areas, exposed areas, weak areas, even ugly areas.** But there is a sense that the slowly, over time, our faith, and our faith family, will take on the shape, beautify, and function it God planned for us with all grace, gratitude, and glory.

Connected with the first point, this kind of renovation occurs when we BEHOLD the glory of the LORD. **His glory transforms us into the same image of Glory.** In his letter to the Colossians, Paul charges: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* <sup>2</sup> *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* <sup>3</sup> *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* <sup>4</sup> *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3.1-4).* We fight FROM a position of righteousness. In other words, the motivation for our fight is not to obtain a right position with God; rather, it is bringing into practice what we already are in position through faith. **Through faith in Christ we are fully JUSTIFIED, and one day we will be perfectly GLORIFIED, but right now we are being SANCTIFIED—set apart, repossessed to bring him glory as we reveal Him in all areas of our lives.** That image renewal requires more than killing sin. Punching at sin, resisting sin with our mind-powers, or otherwise turning from sin...and STANDING STILL is not enough—we are to walk in Christ. Walking in Christ implies ongoing movement in a particular direction. There are two battles. True repentance is BOTH walking away from delight in sin--Adam 1.0 and walking toward delight in Jesus—Adam 2.0. **As we seek the things above, we begin to live out the compassion of Jesus, the kindness of Jesus, the humility of Jesus, the meekness of Jesus, the patience of Jesus, the forgiveness of Jesus, and the love of Jesus.**

### **The MEANS/POWER for Sanctification (HOLY SPIRIT)**

But how does this all occur? How does God bring about this kind of transformation in our lives? If the power for change is rooted in my flesh or comes down to my white-knuckle effort, then I am hopeless. The power and means for sanctification is a grace which comes through the HOLY SPIRIT. **We are**

**encouraged/forced to behold the glory of Christ through the SPIRIT OF GOD, also called the comforter, the helper, and the teacher. We can certainly make efforts to change our behavior, but only God can change our hearts.** God has given us two things that empower us to change. 1) DESIRE 2) MEANS.

Any pursuit of godliness does not in any way take produce merit worthy of reward in the eyes of the Lord. We have already demonstrated that God is the one who has given me ears to hear and eyes to see. My pursuit of godliness is a divinely-inspired and empowered effort to **make use of the means of grace** he has graciously given us. What are the means of grace use by the Spirit?

1. WORD OF GOD- Listening to Jesus | Hebrews 4.12
2. PRAYER TO GOD – Talking with Jesus | Lord’s Prayer
3. PEOPLE WITH GOD – Hanging with family of Jesus/communion | Ephesians 4.16
4. SERVICE UNTO GOD – Going with Jesus | Matthew 23.11

**All of these lead to deeper dependence on grace which means a deeper communion with Christ.** What if I don’t make use of God’s means of grace? God loves you too much not to leave you alone. Consider Pauls’ thorn in your flesh which God gave to make him depend on Grace.

5. TRIALS FROM GOD – Wrestling with Jesus | James 1 (make us perfect lacking in nothing)

<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

**Wherever you are experiencing pressure, stress, anxiety, or suffering in your life—God is acting to shape you. By shape you I mean he desires to make you more and more dependent on His grace.**

**Close | Philippians 1.6** We are redeemed works in progress that **GOD BEGAN.** Philippians 1.6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

God always finishes his projects. The gospel is the motivation, model, and means for change, godliness.

**The act of the Father is the motivation. The example of the Son is the model. The power of the spirit is the means.** Because of our UNION with CHRIST, we pursue a deeper COMMUNION with Him through obedience. **We are not devoted ourselves to moralism, but to Jesus, deepening our dependence upon the grace God gives. When we succeed, we boast in the Lord, When we fail, we boast in the Lord.**

Either way, we boast in the Lord. We are told to believe these things. We are told to practice these things and community. We are told to devote ourselves to these things until we die or Jesus returns.

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