

The Grace of God Applied

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Date: 02 March 2008

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[0:00] The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18. Begin reading in verse 21 and read through to the end of the chapter.

! Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The servant fell on his knees before him. Be patient with me, he begged, and I will pay back everything. The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. Pay back what you owe me, he demanded.

[1:08] His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, Be patient with me, and I will pay you back. But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

When the other servant saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in.

You wicked servant, he said. I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?

In anger, his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

We are returning to that theme of the grace of God again this morning. Last time, we narrowed our focus on the grace of God to the grace of God in salvation.

[2:07] And this morning, I'm wanting to widen that a bit and to consider the grace of God in its various applications to us and especially to hone in on what a difference that ought to make in our lives as we had to be very brief.

So God's grace applied would be a sufficient title this morning. As we begin, let's remember what God's grace is. We saw that God's grace is his kindness.

It's his kindness. It's his love. It's his goodness. But it's all of that shown to the undeserving. So it's unmerited love.

It's unearned kindness. It's undeserved favor. And it's the undeservingness of it that makes it grace. So grace is God's favor to those who are undeserving.

In fact, to those who deserve the opposite. It's love to those who deserve wrath. It's kindness to those who deserve his justice. And it's his goodness to those who deserve his revenge.

[3:15] He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities. Psalm 103:10. That's grace. That's the grace of God.

So then there's something surprising about God's grace. That's the first thing we see. And we're going to see throughout the first half of this message this morning.

There's something surprising then about God's grace. It's not what is expected. It's not what is deserved. It's not the status quo.

It's the opposite of what we think will happen or should happen. There's Adam and Eve. And God places them in a perfect world. And he says, you're free to eat from all the trees in the garden except this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And if you eat from that tree, you will surely die. And they ate from that tree. What do you suppose Adam and Eve were expecting when God found them hiding in the trees?

[4:19] And he came and found them out. I would imagine that they felt like a little boy who's been told he can't have any more cookies until supper when he gets caught with his hand in the cookie jar and mom walks into the kitchen.

Here is Adam and Eve and they've been told not to. And they have. And now God's found them. And they're waiting for the hammer to fall.

But you know the first thing that they find from the mouth of God is a curse upon the serpent. There are consequences for their sins and that's coming.

But the first thing out of his mouth was a curse upon the serpent, which involved a blessing for them. Salvation.

The earliest gospel promise. Promised life and blessing to Eve and to her seed. As God said, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

[5:27] He will crush your head and you will bruise his heel. That was grace. Surprising grace. In a context where they would have expected the opposite.

Now think back to the angels that fell first. They fell before Adam and Eve. Before mankind fell.

We read of a third of the stars falling from heaven. Perhaps the number of them that fell with Lucifer. That did not keep their own place that God had given them. But wanted a higher place.

As Peter says, God did not spare the angels when they sinned. But sent them to hell. Putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.

Do you know, children, that God sent no savior to the angels that fell? There was no grace for them at all. Nothing but damnation.

[6:25] That was it. For all of them that fell. And now here is mankind. Kind. Another form of creature that God had made. And he falls.

What's the expectation? The expectation is damnation for all of them. But instead we're surprised by God's grace. There's grace.

For these fallen human beings. We're met with kindness where we expected wrath. And to think that God himself would provide the sacrificial lamb.

And to die in the place of these guilty human beings. That too is surprising. And when we realize that it's none other than his own son.

Whom he loves. That becomes the sacrifice in the place of sinners. We say, this is surprising. This is grace. Such as we've never met with. On earth.

[7:22] There's something surprising then about the grace of God. We see it often in the Lord Jesus Christ. During his time on earth. And those three years of ministry.

John who spent those three years with him. Was impressed. With his grace. And this is what he wrote about him. The word became flesh. And made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory. The glory of the one and only. Full of grace. And truth. John's impressed with this man that he's lived with.

Who he knows to be God. He's impressed. By his fullness of grace. And truth. And not just toward others. But towards them.

The twelve. For he goes on to say. From his fullness. Have all we received. And grace upon grace. There's such a fullness. Like the ocean.

[8:18] It ever comes towards you. The waves. They just keep coming. They never stop.

Splashing up on your shore. So grace upon grace. From the fullness in Christ. Has come to us.

John says. And he's amazed. That he should be so full of grace. And truth. We tend to be full of one or the other. And if we're full of truth.

We're short on grace. And if we're full on grace. Then we're compromising some truth. But not Jesus. He's full of grace. And truth. And in so living.

He's simply making known. What God is like. The Lord himself. The living Lord God. Is compassionate and gracious. Slow to anger. Abounding in love.

What would you give. To hear the Lord Jesus Christ. Preach. For just an hour. To be one of those. That came. And sat along. The shoreline.

[9:14] And listen to him. Preach. Psalm 45. 2 says. You are the most. Excellent of men. Your lips have been. Anointed with grace.

Anointed. With grace. And so he comes to his hometown. In Nazareth. And he goes into the synagogue. On the Sabbath. And all were amazed. At the gracious words. That came from his mouth. Gracious words. His lips with grace. Or flow. Surprising words. Surprising kindness. Comes from his mouth. Surprising love. Surprising goodness. For out of the abundance. Of the heart. The mouth speaks. He's so full of grace. Within. That when he spoke. Grace. Poured out. Now you think. Of some of the people. Who met Jesus. During those three years. Of ministry. Who had every reason. To expect wrath. And judgment. From him. And instead. [10:11] Were surprised. By grace. John chapter 4. There's the immoral woman. The Samaritan woman. And she's come out.

To get water. And Jesus is sitting there. And she's not given. The time of day. By others. Perhaps that's why. She's out there. At a time. When no one else. Would be there. Even the other women. Wouldn't talk with her. And he's a Jewish man. Well. What's her expectation. To be treated with. Just ignoring her. Disrespect. And she's surprised. Isn't she. When he. Speaks to her. With such kindness. And respect. And then he goes on. To offer her. Living water. That would quench. Her thirsty soul. Forever. Even eternal life. And this. All the time. Knowing. That she had been married. To five husbands. [11:06] And was. Shacking up with a man. Who wasn't her husband. She is surprised. By grace. Not what she was expecting. John chapter 8.

Jesus is teaching. In the temple courts. And the scribes. And Pharisees. Have a scuffle. And in comes this woman. That they've caught. In the act of adultery. And they make her stand up. Before the crowd. And then they say to Jesus. Teacher. This woman. This woman. Was caught in the act of adultery. And in the law. Moses commanded us. To stone such women. Now what do you say? It's just a trap. They don't care. Two hoots. About this woman. They just want to catch. Jesus in his words. So that they can. Have something. To accuse him for. Jesus just bends over. And starts riding. On the ground. And they keep accusing. And keep asking. [12:01] What do you say? What do you say? Should be done? And so he straightens up. And says to them. Let him who is without sin. Cast the first stone.

And he leans over. And starts riding. In the ground again. And they began to go away. One at a time. The older ones first. Until only Jesus was left. With the woman. Still standing there. Do you see them? What a sight. The holy son of God. And this adulterous woman. That was jerked out of her bed. Of immorality. That's all that's there. And Jesus turns to her. And says woman. Where are your accusers? Are there none? Has no one condemned you? No one sir. She said. Then neither do I condemn you.

[12:56] Go and sin no more. Go and sin no more. She wasn't expecting that. She was expecting to have the book thrown at her. She was expecting to have stones thrown at her.

And she meets with such surprising grace. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. But that the world through him might be saved.

Because whoever believes in him is not condemned. But whoever does not believe. Stands condemned already. Because he's not believed in the name of God's one and only son. Or there's Peter. He said he would die with Jesus. Didn't he? He'd die with Christ before he would ever deny him. Never Lord. Will that happen to me.

But in that moment of weakness. And under the power of temptation. He falls three times. And he says he doesn't even know the man. And he swears to it.

[13:56] With an oath. What does Peter deserve? Well he deserves the cold shoulder. That we often give to others who have offended us.

And hurt us. He deserves to have Jesus not to acknowledge him before the Father. In the day of judgment. But when the rooster crows. Jesus turns and gives Peter a look that would have melted a stone.

And Peter goes out and weeps bitterly. He was met with grace. There was grace in that look. And the message from the angel is.

After his death. That Jesus wants to meet with you. Apostles and Peter. Especially Peter. And he meets alone with Peter. In private.

And then he publicly reinstates him into useful ministry. For the kingdom. Not what Peter deserved. Not what he expected. He was surprised with grace.

[14 : 59] The Roman soldiers who spit in his face. Who beat him. Who took the staff and hit him with it. Who pressed the crown of thorns. And put a robe on him. And mocked him. And then took the nails.

And pounded them into his hands and feet. They were used to having men curse them when they did that. But not this man. When they hurled their insults at him.

He did not retaliate. When he suffered. He made no threats. Instead he surprised them all. With grace. There was grace dripping from his lips.

As on the cross he cried. Father forgive them. They don't even know what they're doing. Surprising grace. And that wicked criminal dying on the cross beside him.

Who just moments earlier had been mocking him too. And had come to his senses. On the cross. And now was pleading for mercy.

[15 : 58] He didn't give him what he deserved. Go to hell where your life of sin deserves. No. Today you will be with me. In paradise.

Surprising grace. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That though he was rich. Yet for your sakes.

He became poor. So that we through his poverty. Might be made rich. The grace of Jesus. We didn't deserve that. Jesus being made poor.

That we might be made rich. He treated us infinitely better than what we deserve. That's grace. Now how like Jesus are you?

You see this is the application. That the grace of God should do. Are people ever surprised. At the way you treat them. When they've mistreated you. That's grace.

[16 : 58] That's likeness to Jesus. This is the Jesus who tells us. Take my yoke upon you now. And learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls.

And so in the gospels. We put our neck in the yoke with Jesus. And we read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And we're walking through the gospels. With our neck in the yoke with Jesus. And we're learning from him.

To surprise others with grace. Who deserve wrath. To surprise others with a word of kindness. Who deserve a word of judgment. And then we.

With our neck still in the yoke. We head off into our day. And we go to work. And we go to school. And we go wherever we're going. And. And we are learning of Jesus.

And when we're about to say something. And chew somebody out. We feel the pull on the yoke. That. Is Jesus. Say not that way, John.

[17 : 54] This way. You answer in kindness. In the yoke with Jesus. Learning of him. So when we're cursed.

We bless. And when we're. Persecuted. We endure it. And when we're slandered. We answer kindly. And when they insult us. We privately pray for them.

And when they do us wrong. We answer. By doing them. Good. Jeff Thomas tells the story. Of a white Christian businessman.

Who had a furniture store. In Mississippi. And a black brother was in. And was fellowshiping with him. Just the two of them there. And then a bigoted white man.

Came in. And said things to this black man. That the white man. Was ashamed to be a white man. In his presence. The Christian was.

[18 : 51] And he called him on it. You ought never to speak to any human being. The way you've spoken to this man. And the man had a few more words to say.

To shame this black man. And off he went. In a huff. And the black man turned to his Christian brother. And he says.

Do you know. The revenge I'd like to take someday. On him. We'd be out in the country. And I'd be driving along. And I'd see his car there.

Along the side of the road. With a flat tire. And he. He. Not having. A jack. To fix his own tire. And I'd pull my car over.

And I'd get out. And I'd change his tire. That's the revenge I get. Paying back good. For evil.

[19:49] Not what's expected. But something surprising. Something that. That you don't see often in this world. But something that you see often in Jesus. Grace. Grace.

Where. Wrath. Is deserved. How like Jesus are you? How much are you learning from him? Is there anything surprising. About your treatment of others?

Or is it just the status quo? Good to those who are good to you. Tit for tat. What do you do. That pagans do not do. Jesus asks. How much of grace.

Is there in your behavior? How saturated are you with it? Does it season everything you say? Does it take the edge off. Of that comment. To your wife.

To your boss. Colossians 4 and verse 6. Let your conversation be always full of grace. Full of it. Seasoned with salt.

[20:48] So that you may know how to answer everyone. There's Joseph and his ten brothers. How jealous they were of him.

And how they hated him for his dreams. About him being the one that they would bow down to. And how unjustly they treated him. Selling him as a slave.

To some traveling merchants. Heading toward Egypt. You understand how that would change his life forever. To be ripped out of his father and mother's arms. And sent off as a young man.

Into a foreign land. We didn't know anyone. And now he's not a free man. He's now a slave. Wasn't very nice. Was it kids?

What they did to Joseph. Brother Joseph. And years later. When they went to Egypt for food. In that great famine. That brought them there. And Joseph. Was number two in the land.

[21:44] How does Joseph repay them? Well he gives them free food. For themselves. And for their families.

And eventually. When he reveals himself to them. He invites them. To move up to Egypt. And that they would have the best part of the land. In which to live. He would use his relationship with the Pharaoh.

To see to it. That they would have a wonderful life. In Egypt. Surprising grace. It's not what they expected. And it's surely not what they deserved.

Was it? In fact. It was too good to be true. And they were afraid. That it wasn't true. They thought he was just putting on a show. And when. They all moved up to.

Egypt. And settled. And father Jacob died. They said. Uh oh. Now we're in trouble. Joseph was just treating us nicely.

[22:38] Until dad dies. And now he's going to have our goat. And so they came to Joseph. And said. Your father left these instructions. Before he died. This is what you're to say to Joseph.

I ask you to forgive your brothers. The sins and the wrongs they committed. In treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants. Of the God of your father. And when their message came to him.

Joseph wept. They don't get it. My. My grace is real. My kindness. My love. In the face of their. Offense is real.

And he wept. That they. Thought that he would think otherwise. And his brothers then came. And threw themselves down before him. We are your slaves. They said. But Joseph said to them. Don't be afraid.

Am I in the place of God. You intended to harm me. But God intended it for good. To accomplish what is now being done. The saving of many lives. So then don't be afraid.

[23:32] I will provide for you. And your children. And he reassured them. And spoke kindly to them. You see. His.

Response was so surprising. That they thought it was too good to be true. And they doubted it. And he had to reassure them. And say it over and over. And prove to them over and over. That his grace was real.

Now children. You may not have ten brothers like Joseph. But if you've got one brother. You're going to need a lot of grace. And you're going to have a lot of opportunities. To.

Show this grace. To treat them well. When. He has treated you. Wrong. Family life is a place where we often hurt each other.

Because we're pressed into this house. And. And though we all scatter in the morning. We all keep coming back at night. And we spend all this time together. And we irritate each other.

[24 : 33] And we bump into each other. And we say words that are sharp. And cutting. And. Sometimes we mean to hurt them. But with our words. And other times. They take offense when none was given.

But the closer we live together. The more potential there is. For offending each other. You'll have great opportunities. To surprise your brother. Your sister.

With grace. When they deserve. The opposite. It. So. So. So just go ahead. And surprise them this week. When they do something to you. That. Just.

Makes you. Irritated with them. Go ahead and shower them with kindness. And as you try to do that this week. What you'll find is you're inadequate. And you've got more of the revenge in you.

Than you've got the showering of kindness and grace. And you'll see again why you need the Lord Jesus. Who's so kind and gracious to you. To. To get you in the yoke with him.

[25 : 32] And to. To teach you. This business of being gracious. When others. Are so mean. How many divorces. That are pushed through the divorce courts. Would be unnecessary.

If husbands and wives learned. To pay back evil with good. That's all. That one lesson. How many divorces would be saved.

If we would learn to treat each other with grace. When one's out of sorts and unkind. Behaving so undeservingly. There it is. That is the opportunity. Seize it.

That's the chance to show this surprising grace. Kids. It's when your brothers and sisters. Do something mean to you. That you then have an opportunity. To show something of grace. Back to them.

If they're treating you kindly. You can't show them grace. You can show them kindness back. But that's not grace. You can only show grace. When someone's mistreated you. So when someone mistreats you.

[26 : 28] Recognize. This is the moment. This is the moment for grace. To surprise them. Was something other than what is natural. To me a sinner. And then we have lots of brothers and sisters in the church.

Don't we? Great opportunities for surprising grace. When's the last time someone at work. Who mistreated you. Was surprised at how kind you treated them back.

Your neighbors should not know a more gracious man. A more gracious woman. Than you in the world. You who have received grace. Anything surprising.

About your treatment. Of others. We're in the Old Testament. And we see a man sitting under the shade of a vine. And he's pouting.

In fact he's angry at God. And his name's Jonah. The Jonah syndrome. We all fight it to some degree or another. We're sure glad when God is gracious to us.

[27 : 32] But we don't want him being gracious to others. Especially our enemies. Grace for us. Justice for them. That's the recipe we like to live with.

Now who is this man sitting under the vine? And what has he just experienced? Well he's the man that just offended God.

When God says go there. He went there. He rebelled against God. And God sent a storm after him. And through the storm. The sailors threw him overboard. And Jonah deserved to go to the bottom. And never come up. That's what he deserved.

But what did he receive? Kids do you know the name of that great fish that swallowed him? His name was Grace. He deserved to go to the bottom and stay.

[28 : 29] But God sent his grace to swallow him. And to bring him back. And to burp him up onto the earth. On dry ground. Now this man has just lived through this. He still has the stench on his clothes.

Of the innards of that fish. And he's sitting here pouting. Why? Because God is going to show grace to these Ninevites. Listen to him.

Oh Lord is this not what I said when I was still at home? That's why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and a compassionate God. Slow to anger and abounding in love.

A God who relents from sending calamity. Now oh Lord take away my life. For it's better for me to die than to live. There's absolutely nothing surprising here.

This piece of work by Jonah is just predictably bland and fleshly. It's so boringly sinful. It's what we do whenever we think others have it coming to them.

[29 : 33] And we want to see them get it. And they don't. There's such a noticeable absence of the surprising life of grace. And how sad that it should be found in one whose whole existence, sitting there on the hill overlooking Nineveh.

His whole existence is grace. He owes to grace. How quickly we forget. Forgetfulness. It's our great enemy.

I've been struck with that in the last couple weeks. Just how much of the Christian life is just remembering. Isn't that the message of Deuteronomy?

You forget. Now remember. Don't forget. Remember. Remember. And so we need to get back to remembering. Remembering what a sinner saved by grace I am.

Remember, John, your total depravity before you came to Christ. Remember your remaining depravity that is just as deserving of hell today as it was then. Remember. Remember.

[30 : 40] Get back to Calvary and the grace of God on display there. Back to the throne of grace. Confessing your sins. And that's the whole lesson of Jesus in Matthew 18.

The passage read for us that no matter what another who has sinned against us has done. No matter how painful it is and how wrong and unjust it is.

It is a molehill compared to what we have done in sinning against the almighty, good and gracious King of Heaven. We need to remember that when someone comes with their offense at us.

We need to remember the mile high mountain of my sin against God. And to think that he has shoved that whole mountain into the depths of the sea and will remember it no more for Jesus' sake.

Surprising grace. Can I not then forgive my brother who sinned against me? Not just seven times, but seven times seventy.

[31 : 46] Go on forever forgiving. That's the way God treats me. Remember. Remember. Freely you have received. Freely give.

We like to marinate our meat before we grill it. And you put the meat in the oils and spices and you just let it soak.

You've got to let it soak long enough that the flavoring actually gets inside of the meat. And then you can take the meat out of the marinade.

But you can't take the marinade out of the meat. You taste its flavor in every bite of that piece of every bit of that steak. It works its way through the hole and gives its distinct flavor to each bite. But time is one of the critical factors in this thing. Five minutes in the marinade sauce will not do it. Overnight is better. Some time.

[32 : 47] Give some time. Let it soak for hours. Or else the flavor won't get in. And I ask you, are you soaking long enough in the grace of God that the flavor of God's grace in Christ is getting in?

And it's permeating your whole being so that when someone bumps into you, what they taste is the grace of Jesus. When someone offends you, what they get back is not what they expect from man, but what they will come to appreciate in Christ.

Grace where wrath is deserved. Hebrews chapter 5. The writer to the Hebrews is telling us what a gracious high priest we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We sang of him, Jesus, my great high priest, who offered his blood and died. And in Hebrews 5, 1 to 3, every high priest, this is talking about in the old covenant.

Who is to be high priest? Well, every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

[34 : 04] He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray. Since he himself is subject to weakness, this is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

Isn't it something how God knows us so well? He knows that you put a uniform on a man and he's going to start feeling proud. You give a man an office, be it the high priest of Israel, and he's going to start growing proud.

And when others have their sins and offenses and problems, he's going to start being harsh with them. So we need to build into the system something to counteract what comes naturally to men.

And it's this, that before any high priest ever offers a sacrifice for another sinner, he first has to offer one for himself.

And what is that? That's a confession that I am a needy, poor sinner. And I have no cleansing, no upright status with God, other than what comes by way of bloody sacrifice.

[35:22] So when my brother or sister or my neighbor comes to confess their sins, and I am to represent them with a sacrifice before God, I don't, you again? That sin again?

I can't treat him with harshness. I can't treat him unlovingly and with a lack of gentleness. Why not? Because I've still got the blood splattered on my priestly garments from having to go and to offer sacrifice for my own sins.

And so I am able to deal gently with others who just like me have weaknesses and have gone astray. When you've just come from receiving forgiveness at the throne of grace, you're ready to deal gently with other sinners who just like you need grace.

So if you're ever harsh, if you're ever short with others because of their sins and faults, there's always reason to ask, when's the last time I've been to the throne of grace begging for forgiveness for a specific sin of mine, and I've named it to God, God, I just had this proud thought.

God, I just said a word that was unkind and was not right. God, where I looked with my eyes, what I did with my feet, where I went, it was sinful, it was against.

[36:50] Oh, have mercy on me for Jesus' sake. When's the last time I've gone begging forgiveness? We're not safe to live a day without asking for forgiveness.

Is that not why our Lord teaches us to pray, give us this day our daily bread, forgive us. Again, we're asking every day, forgive us our sins, as we also forgive those who sin against us.

Every time we're forgiven and cleansed, we receive grace. Never does God owe us forgiveness. No, He owes us wrath.

He gives us grace. So we come to the applications here at the end. Do you really believe in the grace of God?

Remember at the beginning of this series, we said we all carry around with us two different views of God. There's the view of God that we have theoretically, and you can check with our confession of faith, and that's what we believe about God.

[37:57] And there's all the verses, and I've looked them up, and I've read them, and that's what I believe about God. And then there's our practical view of God, out of which we live every day. It's the God as we think of Him in the midst of life.

And sometimes the practical view of God is nowhere close to our theoretical view of God.

Sometimes the practical view of God, the God out of which we live, doesn't even correspond at all to the God of the Bible as He really is.

Well, how about this one? This attribute of grace? We all, you must believe He is a God of grace if you believe the Bible. But what about your practical view of God? Is a God you lived before?

You're a gracious being? The first point here of application and summary of what we've just gone through is that lack of grace toward others is a practical denial of God's grace to you.

You're acting as if you don't need grace. You're acting as if you haven't received grace. Secondly then, all discontent and complaining is a practical denial of God's grace.

[39:14] Did you know, kids, that when you complain, you are saying, I deserve better than what I'm getting. When you complain, you don't say those words, but that's what you're saying.

Your heart is saying, I really deserve better. Isn't that right? That at the bottom of our discontent is this ruling belief that I really deserve better than this.

Well, a grace man knows better. A grace woman knows better. A grace man knows he doesn't treat me as my sins deserve. Now, follow the logic.

What do we deserve from God because of our sins? Well, we deserve hell, don't we? It's one of the questions we put to every baptismal candidate as they come and want to identify with Christ.

Do you believe that you are a hell-deserving sinner whose only hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ? Yes, I do. And how easily the words roll off our tongues.

[40:19] I believe I'm a hell-deserving sinner. Do we really? What are we saying when we say that? We are saying, I believe that I deserve from God.

If I got what I had coming from God, I would be in a place of agony forever and ever. Uninterrupted agony. Every day, torments.

Every moment of every day, the wrath of God. That's what I deserve. From my creator. The total absence of God's goodness.

His wrath upon my body and my soul. And folks, if I really believe that, it would shut my mouth of complaining.

It would heal my discontented spirit. Because no matter what I'm going through, it's never as bad as I deserve. It's always grace. Always grace.

[41 : 25] Another day out of hell is grace. So how are you today, Daniel? Oh, I may be in the lion's den, but I'm not in hell where I deserve to be. I'm doing well.

And how are you, Mr. Job? Well, as you can see, I'm covered from head to foot with painful boils.

And you can see the tears through my ashes and a broken heart that's lost all ten children.

And I don't have any more of my wealth of the past. And my friends themselves have turned against me. But I'm not in that place of weeping and gnashing of teeth forever.

I'm not in the place where the worm never dies and the fire never goes out. I'm not in the place where one drop of water upon the tongue would be a luxury.

But it is denied. And all because of God's grace. So how are you doing today, Mr. and Mrs. Christian?

[42 : 36] So much better than I deserve, thank you. And thanks to God's grace in Jesus Christ. You see, our problem is when we compare ourselves with the Joneses or the neighbors on either side of us and the friends at school, and they have this and that, and they're healthy and wealthy and popular and we don't have this and we're sick and we're in trouble and so we're discontented and we're complaining.

We're comparing with the wrong people. We're to find the guy in hell and compare ourselves with him. That's where I should be today if I had what I really deserve.

But look at me. I'm in the land of the living. I know Jesus Christ. I have the forgiveness of my sins. I have eternal life. I have heaven awaiting me. I have the Holy Spirit.

I have a host of church people, brothers and sisters in Jesus that love me. And we go on and on.

But that guy in hell doesn't have, he doesn't have a drop of God's goodness.

And that's what I deserve. Anything better than hell is grace. grace. And so a posture of seeing myself worthy of hell will make me thankful for any good thing since I am so unworthy of it.

[43 : 59] Grace, you see, reminds us of our unworthiness of any good thing. That's the third point.

If we believe in the grace of God, then every good thing we receive from God is grace. Every good thing we receive from God is grace. There's Jacob, and he's heading back home after he's gone away, fleeing from his angry brother Esau that wanted to kill him.

And he's found a wife, actually two of them, and worked for 14, and then more years. And as he's coming back, he's loaded now. He's been blessed by God. And he's coming back, but he's afraid of meeting his brother Esau.

And this is his prayer on the eve of meeting brother Esau after all those years. He says to God, I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant.

I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. I am unworthy of all of this.

[45 : 10] Now that's the perspective we need to keep, the unworthiness. Because remember, that's grace. Grace is favor. It's unmerited, that we don't deserve.

We're unworthy of. And that's the perspective that needs to control us, that every good thing we receive from God is grace, because we're unworthy of it. So taste God's grace in all of his gifts to you.

The believer should have a double enjoyment of God in all of his gifts. In his gifts, do you have a wife, man? You have a double enjoyment of her in God.

She is not only the goodness of God to you, but she is the grace of God to you. You don't deserve her. Did you have food this morning, young person?

Listen, that not only shows God's goodness, it shows his grace. Be sure to taste the grace of God in that food. In all the good things that we have, we must appreciate the grace of God because we're so unworthy.

[46 : 17] At the end of the day, what can we say even if we always obeyed? I am but an unprofitable servant. Unprofitable, unworthy. I don't deserve your kindness.

We don't put God in our debt because of the way we live. That's the reality in which grace operates. It recognizes God's grace in all of his good gifts.

Over the Christmas holidays, some of us watched as a family the sound of music and toward the end of the movie there's Maria and she's come back to the Von Trapp family and her heart is really ticking with desire for this captain but he's engaged and so there's no hope for me and yet I must

come and see what will happen.

And they're out in the woods. You remember the scene? And he's just canceled the engagement with Mrs. Stuckup, whatever her name was. And now he's ready to tell her of his love and she's ready to tell him of her love and it's going to be great forever with this couple.

And then she starts to sing. Bless her heart. But what she sang, what she sang, Somewhere in my youth or childhood I must have done something good.

[47:54] To have the man of my dreams as my husband. She's not amazed at God's grace in giving her this gift.

She's amazed at herself. That somewhere in my youth or childhood I must have done something really good to have deserved this.

You see all the I deserve this good gift. How different from Jacob. I am unworthy of the least of your kindnesses and of your goodness and mercy to me.

That's the spirit we must live with. But God knows that we're born with the spirit of Maria in our hearts. She learned it from the nuns and that whole system of merit.

We earn God's good gifts runs through the system and it runs through our human nature and we must get to the cross.

[48:54] We must learn again the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ kindness to those who are deserving wrath. That whenever we receive something good we say that's grace.

I didn't deserve that. That's grace. That's unmerited kindness. Know how it will keep us thankful. Fourth lesson.

All we receive in answer to prayer is grace. Hebrews 4 and verses 16. We have a great high priest in heaven who's able to sympathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted just as we are so we ought to come to him in prayer.

So then let us approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Where do you go when you pray? Well you say I stay at home or I...

Yes, but where do you go with the eye of faith? You go to a throne don't you? You go to a throne of grace. You approach a throne of grace like a servant coming before the sovereign and you go to this throne of grace.

[50:02] It's a throne. That means the one sitting on it is a king. He's a kingly priest. He has all authority. But it's a throne of grace.

That means that everything you walk away with from this throne is grace. Has the character of being undeserved. No one ever comes away from this throne with anything they deserve.

All you find at this throne is mercy and grace. So when you pray do you feel like you don't deserve what you're asking for? You ought to. You ought to feel that way.

Because all that's given here is grace. But oh the encouragement of the fact that it's a throne of grace. The one seated on the throne is the king of grace. And it is a throne of grace from which he dispenses mercy and grace.

So come and come and ask him. And go away thanking him for his grace. That's why we ask everything that we ask at this throne in Jesus' name.

[51:03] We don't come saying now give me what I deserve. We say give me what Jesus deserves. I don't ask this from you because of my righteousness. I ask you because of Jesus' righteousness.

So all of our prayers are grace. And fourthly sinners who have received grace should tell others or fifthly I guess it is lastly anyway sinners who have received grace should tell others where grace is to be found.

And now I'm thinking of Saul of Tarsus and you know what he's up to. He's persecuting the church. He's tracking down Christians. He's throwing them in prison. He's forcing them to blaspheme the name of Jesus.

He's murdering them. And then he meets the risen glorified Lord Jesus. And it's not long. I mean he's blinded by the light brighter than the sun.

He's thrown to the ground off of his horse. He's blind. And it's not long before he finds out who he's just met. I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

[52:09] And when you touch my sheep you touch me. Now what's the expectation? You're Saul of Tarsus and you've just been out murdering Christians. You're on your way to get some more

down in Damascus.

What are you expecting? You're expecting the hammer to fall. To rub this guy out. He's hurting my people. We'll finish him right here. But instead no, Jesus treats him with unbelievable kindness. And he forgives him everything. He gives him a pardon. It's all freely forgiven. And this man is forever changed by the grace of God met in Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

And grace now becomes the dominant theme of his life. Paul from top to bottom is a grace man. In his writings you see it.

He now sees himself as existing for the praise of his glorious grace which he's freely given us and the one he loves. His whole identity is wrapped up in the grace of God. I am what I am by the grace of God.

[53:20] Ask Paul about anything he is and he's accomplished. He'd just say I am what I am by the grace of God. He didn't give me what I deserve and that's why I'm able to be and do what I am. And his whole goal in life has changed.

He now lives to make known the gospel which he calls the gospel of God's grace. The good news from heaven. The fact that God has anything good to say to us sinners is grace.

And Paul spends his life making known that good news. He'd been a part of a religion where you had to earn God's favors and now he's met up with the free grace of God in Christ and he glories in it and he says I consider my life worth nothing to me if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.

The task of testifying to the gospel. The good news of God's grace. Believers, you've tasted that the Lord is gracious. Now go tell other sinners who are dying in their sins where they can find grace.

Magnify that grace. Spread it abroad that others too might come to taste and see how gracious our Lord and Savior is. Let's pray.

[54:42] Oh Lord, when we read your word there is no way that we can help but come to the conclusion that you are a God of amazing grace and we feel our lips of saying thank you are so shallow.

Oh, make us to appreciate it more. Make us more surprised that grace has found us out. You who said I will be gracious to those to whom I will be gracious.

Thank you for your grace to us. Lord, we sometimes act as if you're not gracious. Sometimes people receive from us words and actions that would say we've never received much grace ourselves and so we don't know how to show it.

Lord, that's a lie. Come and help us. We're weak. We want to respond as our Savior so come and help us to exalt His grace in the way we live when we're mistreated.

Lord, we thank you for that throne of grace. We thank you that sinners this morning can come and find grace. Do draw them and help us then to go and to tell them.

[55:58] We ask for Jesus' praise that others might come to taste what we have enjoyed of His grace. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.