

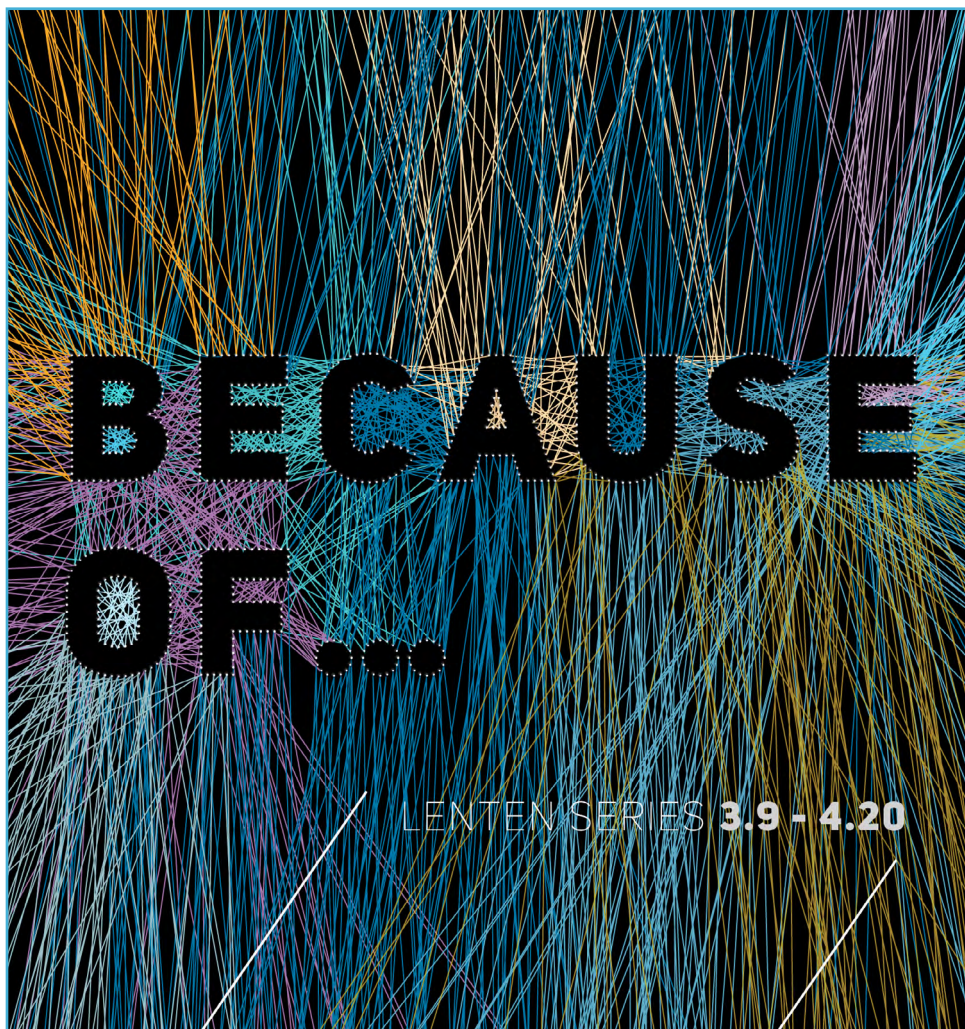
GLENKIRK CHURCH



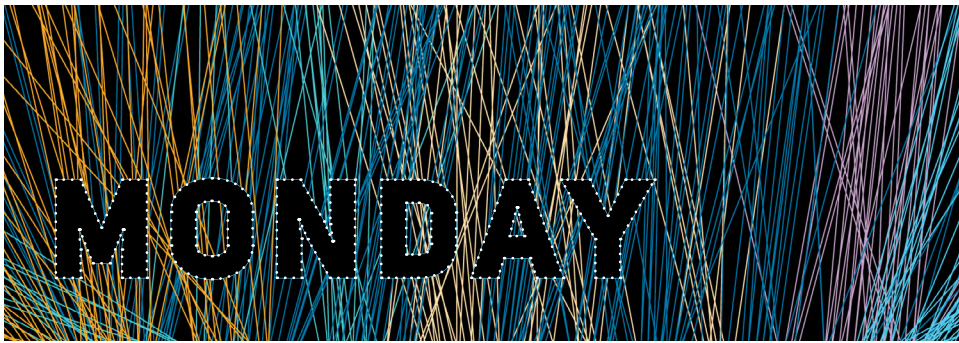
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

DEVO

MARCH 31 - APRIL 4, 2025



LENTEN SERIES 3.9 - 4.20



Read Ephesians 1:7

“In [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)

This week we are looking at the concept of “grace” as it is used in the New Testament. Grace is a core belief for Christ followers (right up there with “salvation” and “faith”), but the word is used differently today than it is in the Bible. Today the word “grace” carries a sense of being gracious and forgiving in our behavior, or maybe being graceful in our demeanor. We “say grace” at the table, or ask others to “give us a little grace.” But the reality of God’s grace is much deeper, more reliable, and all-encompassing than these examples convey.

When I was growing up, we sang a lot about grace in church. Perhaps it was the same for you? We sang “Amazing Grace”—probably the most well-known Christian song in the world today. But there were other hymns of old that proclaimed a rich theology of grace that settled deep in my soul. A favorite was “Wonderful Grace of Jesus.” The first verse and chorus go like this:

*Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin;
How shall my tongue describe it,
Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free.
O the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.*

*Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea,
Higher than a mountain, sparkling like a fountain,
All sufficient grace for even me;
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame.
O magnify the precious name of Jesus,
Praise His name!*

Christian grace and mercy are related regarding salvation, but different in how they apply. Mercy is not getting what you deserve (God’s righteous judgment for sins), whereas grace is getting what you don’t deserve (in Christ, Jesus’ righteous standing before God and adoption into His eternal family).

God’s grace is embodied in the Person of Jesus, and it is made available to us when we invite Christ into our lives. This week we will consider how to draw on that grace more consistently.

REFLECTION

In what ways have you experienced God’s grace over your lifetime? Pray that the Lord will pour out grace in your life in new ways this week.

PRAYERS

ZOE International

ZOE in Mexico: Please pray—and praise—for the impact of an engaging new card game designed to help children guard themselves against sexual exploitation. It’s aiding ZOE’s prevention work and strengthening gospel outreach among parents, youth leaders, and educators.



Read **Ephesians 2:4-5, 8**

“But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions ... it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:4-5, 8)

It has been said that these verses are the most compact expression of the gospel in history. We were spiritually dead in our sins, hopelessly lost. But God loved us and raised us from the dead with Christ, not because we deserved it, but because of grace. Through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, we are rescued and brought to safety and eventually to eternal life. As *The Message Bible* translation puts it this way: *“God did this with no help from us!”* (v. 8). Our part simply was to respond in faith.

What does it mean to say that it is *“by grace we have been saved”*? New Testament scholar Lynn Cohick defines grace as “that favor which is unmerited, undeserved, and even unexpected.” Another way this may be explained is that God gives us what we don’t deserve (grace) and doesn’t give us what we do deserve (judgment). This is a good start to understanding grace.

But we have to make sure we don’t leave it at that. It’s not simply a matter of God putting enough grace into our account to get us

into heaven when we die, with nothing else changing. God’s grace is something at work in us and in the world here and now. As theologian Dallas Willard writes, “Grace is God acting in our lives to accomplish what we can’t accomplish on our own.”

Christians sometimes assume that God saves us by grace plus our good works. But Paul makes it clear that although grace and good works go together, it is God’s grace alone that saves us. When we respond to Christ in faith and receive salvation, we have been saved. But we are also “being saved” as God’s grace works in us and through us over our lifetime. It is by grace that godly patterns of love, joy, peace, patience, graciousness, and self-control can take hold.

REFLECTION

Dallas Willard once said, “We must stop using the fact that we cannot earn grace ... as an excuse for not energetically seeking to receive grace.” What are some ways you can “energetically seek to receive grace” this week?

PRAYERS

ZOE International

ZOE in Thailand: Once a month ZOE leaders and trainees in Thailand travel to far-flung villages to share the gospel among the predominantly Buddhist villagers, most of whom have never heard of Jesus. Please pray for safe travels and hearts that are open to the Gospel.



Read **2 Peter 3:17-18**

“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:17-18)

By grace God saves us, through faith in Christ. We are forever free from the eternal consequences of sin and death! But it’s important to recognize that grace is not a “one and done” deal. Peter’s instruction to “grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus” (v. 18) reminds us that grace isn’t a fixed quantity that is used up when we accept Christ. When Jesus proclaimed, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21), He meant it and expects believers to act accordingly: walk in grateful joy, serve others in Christ’s name for God’s glory, have generous hearts, share the Gospel lovingly, learn evermore about God via His word and prayer, etc.

Grace is not just about the forgiveness of sins; it is the power to live a changed life. Grace is not just the basis for our pardon; it is the means by which we access God’s power today. It is available every moment to strengthen us to meet the challenges we face, and it has the ability to shape our character so that we more closely come to resemble Jesus. In other words, grace is for all of life. Active

and ongoing, it is “God taking us from where we are to where God wants us to be.” (Andrew Thompson)

Living a life that imitates Christ does not come naturally to us. We are not able to live holy lives on our own, but grace and God’s accompanying power are available to help us move in that direction. Theologian Dallas Willard once commented that Christians use up more grace than other people because following Christ requires it! Thankfully, God does not leave us as we are, but rather transforms our hearts and lives as we submit increasingly to grace.

REFLECTION

Are you experiencing God’s grace as power in your life? We sometimes forget that we need God’s grace every day. Make it a daily practice to ask God for grace for whatever the day will bring.

PRAYERS

ZOE International

ZOE in Japan: Pray for ZOE’s effectiveness in sharing the Gospel as they serve alongside government entities in anti-child trafficking efforts. Especially pray for those who staff a busy hotline for victims of sexploitation, providing compassion and resources to help in recovery.



Read [John 1:14, 15](#)

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth ... From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” (John 1:14, 16)

This is one of my favorite passages about grace. Here we learn that God has given us something described as “grace upon grace.” The *Amplified Bible* puts it this way: “... *spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing, favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift.*” When He came to earth, Jesus was “*full of grace and truth*” (v. 14), and when we accept Him into our lives, we are beneficiaries of that fullness (v. 16). So it follows that if Jesus is “*full of grace and truth,*” and if He is in us, then it is possible for us to experience lives “*full of grace and truth*” as well.

Understanding grace in this way can transform our relationship with God. Rather than seeing God as a taskmaster or judge—“the big Traffic Cop in the sky”—we can approach God as a loving Father who wants to heap grace down on us. The true and living God is like the father of the Prodigal Son of Luke 15, the loving father who rushed out to greet, forgive, protect and reinstate the wayward, inheritance-squandering son after waiting longingly for his return.

We can live under grace instead of under the law. The quality of “*fullness*” means that the grace God extends to us never runs out. It is poured out continuously, generously, and unconditionally. It is always available to us, if we just respond and receive it in faith.

REFLECTION

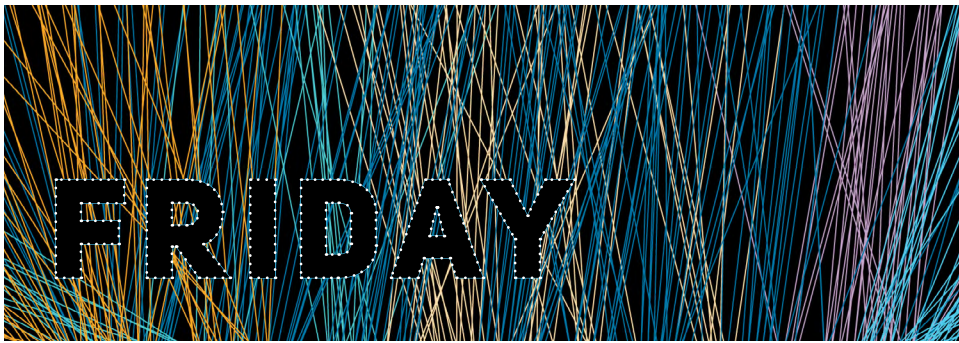
Read this quote slowly and let the truth about grace sink in:

“Grace overcomes shame, not by uncovering an overlooked cache of excellence in ourselves but simply by accepting us, the whole of us, with no regard to our beauty or our ugliness, our virtue or our vices. We are accepted wholesale. Accepted with no possibility of being rejected. Accepted once and accepted forever. Accepted at the ultimate depth of our being. We are given what we have longed for in every nook and nuance of every relationship ... There is a weightlessness about grace. It has the feel of a fairy tale; what makes it a very special fairy tale is that it is true.” (Lewis Smedes)

PRAYERS

ZOE International

ZOE in Australia: ZOE’s Australia team is thrilled that their prevention curriculum is being used by teachers across the nation. Pray for the effectiveness and Gospel impact of both their in-person training classes and the online course aimed at bringing an end to child trafficking.



Read Ephesians 2:4-7

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, 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 ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 2:4-7, emphasis added)

Early on in my faith journey, one of my pastors taught me to pay close attention whenever I come across phrases like “but God” or “so that” in the Bible as there is usually an important truth to be discovered in what follows. That is true of verse seven in this passage. To paraphrase, we are loved by God and we are saved by God so that the riches of God’s grace will be known for all time.

The Passion Translation puts it this way: *“Throughout the coming ages **we will be the visible display of the infinite riches of His grace and kindness**, which was showered upon us in Jesus Christ”* (emphasis added). Paul is reminding the believers in Ephesus that the grace they received was not just for them, but was meant for much more. There are ramifications beyond our personal lives. As God’s people, WE are to be the evidence of God’s grace. Paul called Jesus *“the firstfruits of those who have [been raised from the dead]”* (1 Corinthians); we are the resultant “crop,” the benefactors and fruitful bearers of God’s grace through Jesus Christ.

God is in the business of saving and restoring the world, and we are meant to have a part in that mission. “Salvation for Paul is not a ticket into heaven for your soul, but the entrance into fellowship with God and His people. ... You are saved by grace, and all the promises, hopes, power, and responsibilities of citizenship in God’s Kingdom have been advanced to you in Christ.” (Lynn Cohick) We are grace-filled people with a grace-filled purpose. What a gracious thing it is that God would entrust us to participate in the ongoing redemption of our world. Share this gratefully and lovingly with all you know!

REFLECTION

To what extent are you a “grace-filled” person? What are some ways God might be asking you to extend grace to others in new ways in the coming weeks?

PRAYERS

ZOE International

ZOE in Southern California: Pray for the 177 victims rescued and 333 traffickers/buyers arrested in the latest “sweep” across Los Angeles. ZOE was invited to partner with law enforcement in this operation. May God bless with success ZOE’s local “Walk to END Child Trafficking” in Chatsworth on April 26.

Sources



- “Wonderful Grace of Jesus,” hymn written by Haldor Lillenas, 1918, public domain.
- Lynn Cohick, *Ephesians: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010).
- Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 2006.)
- Andrew C. Thompson, *The Means of Grace: Traditioned Practice in Today’s World* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2015).
- Lewis Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don’t Deserve* (New York: HarperOne Publishing, 2009).

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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