

GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

BACK TO THE BASICS

A Study of the Essentials of the Christian Faith

Sermon Notes

Grace Alone, Part 2

Ephesians 2:8-10

January 23, 2011

“¹ 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. ¹⁰ 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

- As we study the essentials of the Christian faith, it is imperative that we never take our eyes off of two truths: (1) who God is; and (2) what He has done.
- In fact, it is true that these are the two reasons why we give praise and honor to God: for who He is, and what He has done.
- Psalm 18 beautifully and poetically conveys this truth:

“¹ I love you, O LORD, my strength. ² The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

⁴⁶ The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—

⁴⁷ the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me,

⁴⁸who delivered me from my enemies;
yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me;
you rescued me from the man of violence.
⁴⁹For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing to your name.
⁵⁰Great salvation he brings to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his offspring forever.” Psalm 18:1-3, 46-50

- And so, this morning, we will analyze God’s covenant work of salvation by grace in terms of an extension of who He is.

- I. Plan of Grace
- II. Pursuit of God’s Grace
- III. Price of God’s Grace
- IV. Particular and Personal Nature of God’s Grace**
- V. Power of God’s Grace**
- VI. Purpose of Grace**

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- I. Plan of Grace
 - II. Pursuit of God’s Grace
 - III. Price of God’s Grace

IV. Particular and Personal Nature of God’s Grace
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- The One True and Living God, the God of the Scriptures is one God, eternally existing in Three Persons.
- That is, God’s eternal nature is Triune, and Personal (in that He is three Persons). Therefore, every act of God and every offense to God is **Personal**.
- God’s Personal nature leads as well to an execution of the Covenant of Redemption in a Personal manner as well.
 - When many – if not most – professing Christians speak of salvation; however, it is not in a **personal** sense.
 - Rather, most Christians speak of God’s work in salvation in a general sense.
 - That is, God the Father sent the Son to die for **everyone in the world without exception**. Yet, only those who choose to accept Christ are saved, that is born again by the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - There are at least four fundamental flaws with this predominant belief:

1. It ignores the personal nature of God and the personal manner in which He functions with respect to our salvation.

- From the biblical testimony, the functions of the Persons of the Godhead, with respect to salvation, are as follows:

The Father:

- The Father choose a people, in Christ, before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3).
- The Father predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5).
- The Father foreknew us (Romans 8:29-30)
- The Father gave to His Son all that He was to save (John 17:2, 6).
- The Father sent the Son into the world to be the representative of His people He [the Father] had chosen (John 3:16; Romans 5:18-19).
- The Father “prepared a body for the Son to dwell in as a man.” (Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 10:5)
- The Father gave His Son all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18).
- The Father also gave the Son the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people, thus applying the benefit of His [the Son’s] work to them (Acts 1:4; 2:33).
- The Father also providentially protected His Son throughout His earthly ministry ensuring that He not die prior to the pre-appointed time [Acts 2:23].
- The Father agreed to exhaust His wrath on His Son in order to save His people (Isaiah 53:10-11).
- The Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:4).

The Son:

- The Son agreed to come into this world, assuming the nature of man, and live under and fulfill the Mosaic Law (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14-18).
- The Son agreed to be perfectly obedient to all the commands of the Father (Hebrews 10:7-9). Thus, Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).
- The Son also agreed to lose none whom the Father had given Him (John 6:39; 17:12). He did so by bearing the Father’s wrath “to the end” (John 13:1).
- The Son agreed to become the substitutionary atoning sacrifice for all of His people; voluntarily submitting to His Father’s will and fully exhausting the Father’s wrath for all of His people.
- “[Jesus said] This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” John 6:44

The Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit agreed to accomplish the will of the Father by indwelling and enabling the human Christ to carry out his work on this earth (Matthew 3:16; Luke 4:1, 14, 18; John 3:34).

- He also agreed to apply the benefits of Christ's work to His people after the resurrection and ascension of Christ (John 14:16-17, 26; Acts 1:8; 2:17-18, 33). This, the Holy Spirit accomplishes through the regeneration and sanctification of God's people.
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- From this, we see that if God always acts in accordance with His nature, and His nature is Personal, then salvation must be a personal act. That is, The Father sent His Son to save PERSONS, individual. That is, Christ's work was Personal in Nature.
- The Father gave the Son individuals, persons, to go and save...and the Son did just that.
- In other words, Christ did not come to make salvation possible for an unknown and faceless group of people who decided on their own free will and volition to accept Him. Rather, Christ came to seek, pursue and save all the individuals **persons** the Father gave to Him.

<p>2. The manner in which most Christians speak of salvation calls into question the unity within the Godhead, among the three Persons of the Trinity.</p>
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- With respect to our salvation, few, if any, genuine Christians would assert that every man will be saved (universalism).
- To put it another way, virtually every Christian would agree that the Holy Spirit regenerates only believers. That is, the Holy Spirit does not regenerate every individual – only those who are/will be saved.
- And if this is the case – which biblically it most certainly is – then if Christ did for every individual who ever lived or ever will live, then this would imply disunity within the Godhead. In other words, if the Son died for a different group of people than the Holy Spirit regenerates, then this would be an inconsistent work of the three Persons of the Godhead with respect to our salvation.
- That is to say that, if the work of the Persons of the Trinity in salvation is consistent, then:
 - Those the Father chooses [before the foundation of the world, according to the counsel of His will] are the same as those the Son lived and died for are the same as those the Holy Spirit Regenerates and Sanctifies.
 - Again, universalism (i.e., that everyone, without exception, is eventually saved) is clearly denied in Scripture. Consequently virtually every Christian agrees that the Holy Spirit does not regenerate everyone.
 - Such a harmony within the Godhead demonstrates the perfect unity in the Covenant of Redemption.

- Therefore, we declare that **all** the Holy Spirit regenerates, the Son died for. And **all** the Son died for the Father gave to the Son.

3. The Scriptural testimony speaks of the particular and personal nature of Christ's work on behalf of His people.

Matthew 1:21: “²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

John 10:11,15,26-27: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

John 6:37-39: “³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And 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.”

- One of the most beautiful pictures of our salvation was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Notice, in John 11:43-44, Jesus' words to Lazarus, “⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’ ⁴⁴ The man who had died came out...”
- In other words, just as the Lord does with us, **He called Lazarus by name.**

4. A biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification necessitates a personal and particular view of redemption.

- The biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone lies at the heart of the gospel message.
- **In fact, it is the doctrine of justification that makes the news of the gospel so good.**
- According to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are reckoned righteous and then are blessed as co-heirs with Christ Jesus.
- But to fully understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone, we need to look a little closer.
 - When we often speak of salvation, it seems that we typically speak of the removal of our sins, that is, that we are declared “not guilty” in the high court of heaven.
 - **Yet, this alone certainly does not tell the full story of our salvation.**

“Justification is more than remission or acquittal. This would leave the sinner simply in the position of a discharged criminal – law requires a positive righteousness also. Besides deliverance from punishment, justification implies God's treatment of the sinner as if he was,

and had been, personally righteous. The justified person receives not only remission of penalty, but the rewards promised to obedience [on the basis of Christ's finished work]."

- That is, as **joint-heirs with Christ, justified through faith, and adopted as sons, we receive all of the blessings Christ receives because of His righteous and obedient life.**
- Our justification does not *make us righteous*, rather, it is a legal declaration whereby God declares us righteous because of the work of Christ (although, one day we will be *made righteous* and receive glorified bodies to live with Christ for all eternity). But, **on the basis of this legal declaration by God the Father and Judge, we receive all of the blessings of Christ.**
- In order to understand our justification by faith alone in Christ alone, it is helpful to return to the concept of the imputation of sin:
- As we have seen over the past several weeks:

1. Adam's Sin is Imputed to His Posterity [all of humanity]

- Yet, because of the personal and particular nature of God:

2. The Sin of God's People [the Elect] is Imputed to Christ

- That is, all of the sins of all of those the Father gave the Son were imputed to Christ on the Cross. Then, Christ suffered to the fullest, fully exhausting the wrath of the Father towards all of the sins of His people.
- Yet, the Gospel story does not end there. That is, God's plan of redemption was not intended to make us sinless, but count us as righteous.
- Therefore, the final "imputation" was:

3. The Righteousness of Christ is Imputed to God's People [the Elect]

- That is, according to the Covenant of Redemption, Christ agreed to assume the sin of all the Father would give Him, and the elect would be imputed with the righteousness of Christ.

Philippians 3:9

"and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,"

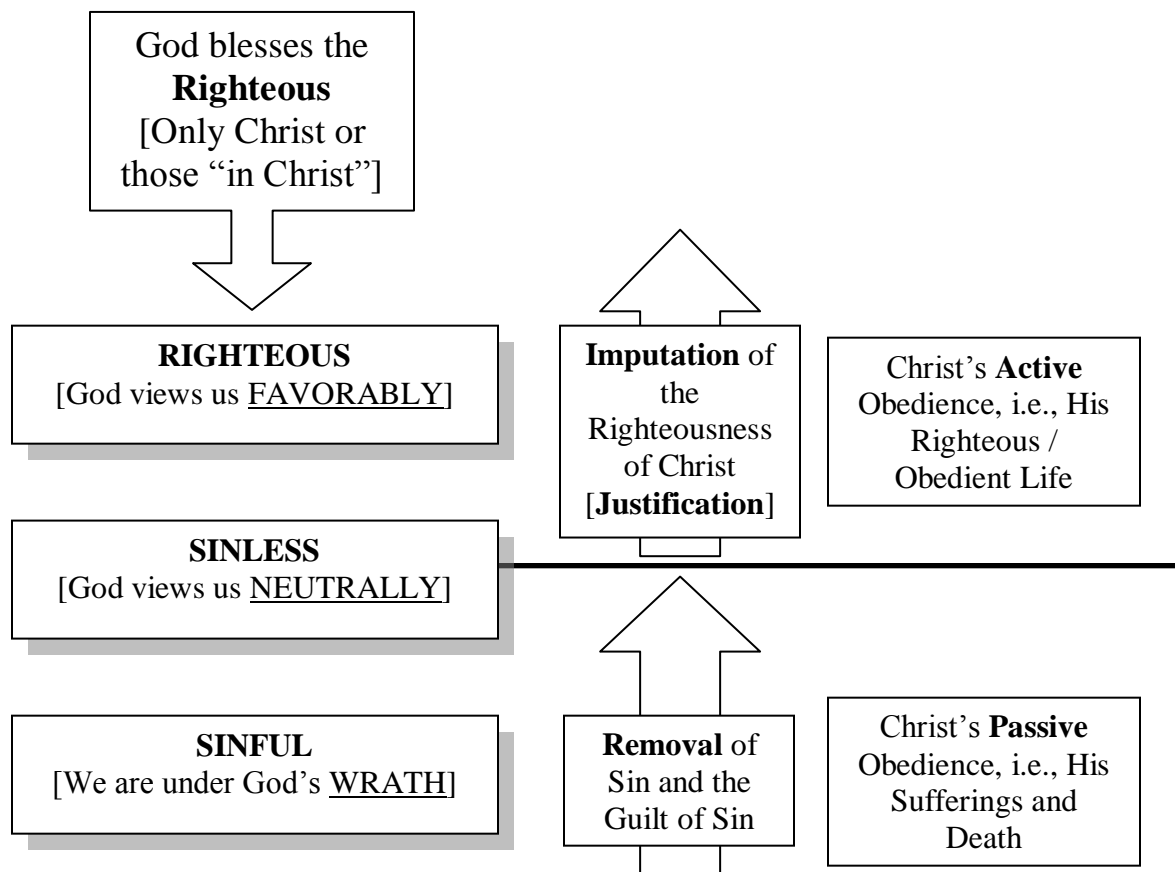
Romans 4:5

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,"

Romans 10:4

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

- **Because our sin and guilt was imputed to Christ, and Christ’s righteousness was imputed to us, we receive more than simply forgiveness of sins.**
- Louis Berkhof correctly writes: “If Christ had merely obeyed the law and had not also paid the penalty, He would not have won a title to eternal life for sinners; and if He had merely paid the penalty, without meeting the original demands of the law, He would have left man in the position of Adam before the fall, still confronted with the task of obtaining eternal life in the way of obedience. By His active obedience, however, He carried His people beyond that point and gave them a claim to everlasting life...His passive obedience consisted in His paying the penalty of sin by His sufferings and death, and thus discharging the debt of all His people...The active obedience of Christ was necessary to make His passive obedience acceptable to God, that is, to make it an object of God’s good pleasure.”
Systematic Theology, pp. 380-381
- In fact, sins not only have our sins been forgiven, but we receive the righteousness of Christ, God views us favorably, as He views Christ – the One in whom He is well pleased. Consequently, God blesses us as though we had perfectly kept the Law.



- Justification is not simply a declaration of innocence. The “high court of heaven” does not simply declare the justified sinner “NOT GUILTY.”

“The doctrine of justification means then that in God’s sight the ungodly man, now ‘in Christ,’ has perfectly kept the moral law of God, which also means in turn that ‘in Christ’ he has perfectly loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself. It means that saving faith is directed to the doing and dying of Christ alone and not to the good works or inner experience of the believer. It means that the Christ’s righteousness before God is *in heaven* at the right hand of God in Jesus Christ and *not on earth* within the believer. It means that the ground of our justification is the vicarious work of Christ *for us*, not the gracious work of the Spirit *in us*.”

Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, pp. 742-743

- Once again, the *means* or *instrument* through which we are justified is faith alone:

Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.’”

- Yet, let us never forget that even faith is a GIFT!

Romans 4:4-5: “Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,”

Acts 5:31: “He [Jesus Christ] is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to **grant repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” [emphasis added]

Acts 11:18: “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, **God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance** that leads to life.’” [emphasis added]

2 Timothy 2:25: “with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth,” [emphasis added]

Ephesians 2:8-10: “⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift** of God,” [emphasis added]

Galatians 3:13-14: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

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- ❖ Just over two weeks ago, on Saturday morning, January 8, 2011, U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, along with twenty other individuals, was shot outside a Safeway grocery store in a suburban area northwest of Tucson, Arizona. Six individuals died in the rampage when allegedly Jared Lee Loughner ran up to the crowd and began firing.

Federal officials have charged Loughner with killing federal government employees, attempting to assassinate a member of Congress and attempting to kill federal employees.

- ❖ Given that the crime took place in Arizona, it is possible that Loughner will face the death penalty because of the nature of his crime. There is no doubt, however, that Loughner will face consequences for his crimes – whether it is the death penalty or lifetime imprisonment.
- ❖ Imagine, however, if a wealthy man offered to take Loughner's place. Imagine if that man said, "Jared Lee Loughner may live in my estate, with all of its comforts and conveniences, and I will take his place – even if that means death." If this sort of offer were made in our country, it would likely make the news; however, no judge would ever agree to such an arrangement.
 - But this is precisely what happened in our situation. We stand guilty of "cosmic treason" and crimes against our Creator. However, in accordance with the Covenant of Redemption, Christ agreed to suffer the full penalty for our "capital crimes" – murder, adultery, lying, stealing... We were declared guilty in the "high court" of heaven, being "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2).
 - Yet, Christ stepped in and took our place. In order to preserve the justice of Almighty God, Christ suffered the consequences for all of our sins – the eternal wrath of an infinitely holy God.
 - But, as we have seen, we were not left "standing in the courtroom 'Not Guilty'"; rather, it was as though we were then brought into the wealthiest community in the world, and given the finest of everything, as though we had ourselves earned it. This is the difference in simple "good news" (i.e., we are NOT guilty), and the "Gospel" (i.e., we are righteous in Christ and co-heirs with Him).
 - **The reason biblical grace is so misunderstood is that we do not see ourselves as bad as the Scriptures say we truly are. The reason for this is that we live in a sinful world, and according to the "laws of our land" we are "righteous" or "right with the law" so long as we do not outwardly break any of the laws governing our land.**
 - **But, it even goes further than this. We actually believe we are righteous as long as we do not get caught. Consider how many times, for example, each individual in this room has exceeded the speed limit in the previous week...or just yesterday! But because some in this room may have a "perfect driving record" we believe we are "righteous" in that area.**
 - Yet, biblical righteousness is not a matter of "keeping one's nose clean" but it involves intentionally obeying and fulfilling the demands of the Law of God in thought, word, and deed. And the first time we do not do this, we have broken the Law and are no longer righteous.

- This is precisely why the work of Christ was so incredible. He fulfilled the Law and became our righteousness. When God views us, He views Christ and blesses us accordingly.

V. Power of God's Grace

- Next, we see the power of God's grace. In short, the power of God's grace is the **power to fundamentally change us – the power to bring us from death to life and change all of who we are.**

John 6:44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

- Jesus, then, states, “No one can come to Me...” The word, here, for “can” is the Greek word *dunatai* [dunatai], meaning “power” or “ability.” In other words, this passage could be translated, “Do one has the ability to come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” It is the same distinction in the English words “can” and “may.” A child may ask, “Can I have a cookie” and a mother responds, “I don’t know, *can* you?” The mother, in this case, is asking a question which implies an obvious positive response [“I don’t know, do you have the ability to eat a cookie?”] Whereas, what she is implying is that the proper question is not “*Can* I have a cookie, but rather, ‘*May* I have a cookie?’”
- John 6:44 lays the foundation for the Reformed doctrine known as *Irresistible Grace*. “The combination of Verse 37 and Verse 44 prove that this ‘drawing’ activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call ‘prevenient grace’ dispensed to every individual [or at least to many], for **this ‘drawing’ is selective**, or else the negative note in Verse 44 is meaningless.”
D.A. Carson
- The word for “draw” here is the Greek word *helkusa* [elkush] which is translated, most accurately, drag. This word occurs eight (8) times in the New Testament: John 6:44; 12:32; 18:10; 21:6; 21:11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; and James 2:6.

John 21:6 states, “And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.’ They cast therefore, and then **they were not able to haul** it in because of the great number of fish.”

John 21:11 states, “Simon Peter went up, **and drew the net to land**, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.”

Acts 16:19 states, “But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they **seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place** before the authorities.”

James 2:6 states, “But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not he rich who oppress you and **personally drag you into court?**”
[emphasis added on each verse]

- Theologian David P. Henreckson states:

“In the Greek, the verb for ‘draws’ is much stronger than most translations put it. Literally, it means “drags.” Unregenerate man does not want, and in fact hates the things of God. But when God decides to claim someone for His own, that regenerate person all of a sudden wants, and in fact loves the things of God (John 3:5-6).”

- The late Baptist theologian and author Arthur Pink writes:

“Well, you say, what do you mean by [“draws”]? I mean this, that God had to overcome the resistance of your will, God had to overcome the reluctance of your heart, God had to overcome you loving of pleasure more than [your] loving of God, your love of things of this world more than Christ. I mean that God had to put forth His power and draw you; and if any of you know anything of the Greek...look up that Greek verb for “draw” in John 6:44...It means “use violence.” It means to drag by force. There is not a Greek scholar on earth that can challenge that statement...It is the same Greek word that is used in John 21 when they drew the net to the land full of fishes. They had to pull with all their might, for it was full of fishes. They had to DRAG it. Yes, my friend, and that is how you were brought to Christ. You may not have been conscious of it, you may not have known inside yourself what was taking place, but every last one of us was a rebel against God, fighting against Christ...and God had to put forth almighty power and overcome that resistance and bring us to our knees; and if any of you object to that strong language, then I am here to tell you, you do not believe in the teaching of this Book on the absolute depravity of man.”

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- And so, the first aspect of the power of God’s grace which saved us is the “drawing” of the Father through the works of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This drawing is personal, particular, and always successful.
 - But, not only does the Father effectually draw us, He changes us.

Ezekiel 26:25-28: “²⁵ **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.** ²⁶**And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.** ²⁷**And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.** ²⁸**You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”**

Jeremiah 31:31-33: “³¹Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”**

- Consider the power of the promises contained here in these Verses:
 - God will wash us clean from sin.

- He will give us a new heart (of flesh), removing the heart of stone, thus making us alive.
- He will put the Holy Spirit within us.
- He will write His law on our hearts.
- We will desire to obey Him (“...and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”).
- We will dwell with Him “in a land” (a foreshadow of heaven).
- He will be our God.

❖ **Therefore, not only does He declare us righteous and bless us accordingly, but He promises to change us as well.**

VI. Purpose of Grace

- Finally, we turn our attention to the ultimate Purpose of God’s saving grace. Since our salvation has nothing to do with us, it brings glory to God.

Ephesians 1:3-4, 13: “³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Revelation 5:11-14: “¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

Philippians 2:8-11: “⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

❖ The Plan of Redemption begins with the Father and ends with Him in praise and adoration!

1 Corinthians 15:20-24: “²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power...”