

“The Experience of Grace”
Romans 16:20
(Preached at Trinity, March 25, 2012)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to the end of **Verse 20** we find Paul's typical benediction.
Romans 16:20 NAS - "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."
 - a. The KJV even adds the word, "Amen."
 - b. As we've seen, Paul makes several statements in Chapters 15-16 that have the sound of a benediction.
 - **Verses 5-6 of Chapter 15** carry the sound of a benediction
Romans 15:5-6 NAU - "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - **Verse 13 of Chapter 15** sounds like a benediction
Romans 15:13 NAU - "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
 - **Verse 33 of Chapter 15** sounds like a benediction
Romans 15:33 NAU - "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."
 - c. And, of course, the final verse stands as the actual benediction
Romans 16:27 NAU - "to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."
2. But this phrase at the end of **Verse 20** is very typical of Paul's benedictions.
 - a. This is probably why we find the "Amen" added in the KJV, TR – it would be the natural impulse of the scribe to add the "amen."
 - b. And it accounts for its addition in **Verse 24**
Romans 16:24 NAU - "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*"
 - c. We also find it at the end of several of Paul's other epistles:
1 Corinthians 16:23 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you."
2 Corinthians 13:14 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."
Colossians 4:18-1 NAU - "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you. "
1 Thessalonians 5:28 NAU - "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."
2 Thessalonians 3:18-1 NAU - "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. "

1 Timothy 6:21 NAU - "Grace be with you."

2 Timothy 4:22 NAU - "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

Titus 3:15 NAU - "All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in *the* faith. Grace be with you all."

- d. And in each of these benedictions the KJV adds, "Amen."
3. Since this expression is so typical of Paul's benedictions it would be tempting to just dismiss it as just an expression used to close out a letter, like us using the word, "Sincerely" or "Yours Truly" or as Christians often state, "Yours in Christ" or "In Christ" or "In His Name."
 4. But Paul doesn't write words without meaning, and this isn't the actual benediction of Romans. So we need to consider it more carefully.
Paul has made the wonderful statement that Satan is defeated. He will soon be crushed beneath our feet. But then he makes this statement on grace. In other words, although Satan is defeated, we are still in need of much grace as we battle against him.
 5. God has been stirring my heart over the last several weeks and months regarding this statement – "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."
He has been impressing me more and more of how essential His grace is; of how desperate I am for His grace.
 6. So this morning I want to share with you some of my meditations regarding His grace. I'll divide it into four categories:
God's grace in *Salvation*, in *Sanctification*, in *Suffering*, in *Service*

I. God's Grace in Salvation

- A. We are all familiar with this aspect of God's grace
 1. We affectionately refer to Reformed theology as "The Doctrines of Grace" or "Sovereign Grace."
 2. We all know that salvation is by grace alone
Ephesians 2:8-9 NAS - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast."
 3. God's promise of the Gospel in Genesis 3 is referred to as the Covenant of Grace.
- B. But do we really understand the reality of how dependent we are upon God?
As I consider the work of preaching and salvation the more I am humbled
 1. My best sermon is nothing apart from God's transforming grace
 2. I'm brought to my knees as I consider the impossibility of changing men's hearts.
 3. Oh God, grant us souls. Make your Word effectual.
- C. What about the sinner seeking Christ?
 1. We don't do an adequate job of preaching God's grace here
 2. Is the knowledge of our great need of God's grace in salvation just for believers? Is it a secret that we keep hidden until a person is saved?
 3. Should we not tell sinners how needful they are of God's grace?
 - a. Should we not tell them how unreasonable it is for them to continue fleeing from God; how foolish it is to fight against God?
 - b. Should we not tell them that the reason they continue to resist God is because of their sinful heart?
 - c. Should we not tell them that God can change their heart?

- d. Should we not tell them to cry out for God to change their heart?
4. Are we as Christians the only ones who should cry out for God's grace in salvation?
5. Salvation is not by works. It is not by our might or by our power. Salvation is entirely of God.
But this doesn't mean that salvation is obtained without effort.
 - a. Don't get me wrong, we aren't saved by effort, but those who come to Christ come with great passion and energy.
 - b. Should we not tell sinners to seek God with their whole heart?
 - c. But we know even this is by God's grace
Our passion for Christ, our trust in Christ, our hatred of sin – all is given by God's grace.
Jeremiah 24:7 NAU - "I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart."
6. There have been multitudes who have struggled long before obtaining peace for their soul
Luke 13:24 NAS - "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." ἄγωνίζομαι
7. The point is, the sinner must understand how desperate he is for Christ
As a pastor I've counseled those who were sincerely seeking Christ but could not find rest for their soul. And I could not give them that peace. But they understood clearly that salvation is of the Lord. And they continued to pursue Christ with their whole heart – and they found Him by His grace.
8. We need to understand how desperately we are in need of God's grace for salvation.
John 6:65 NAS - "And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."

II. God's Grace in Sanctification

- A. We understand the human duty to live holy lives before God
 1. We are to discipline ourselves
1 Cor. 9:27 NAS - "but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."
 2. We are to mortify our sin. We are to flee all appearance of evil and we are to do it with great energy.
2 Timothy 2:22 NAS - "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
 3. But every Christian understands clearly that it is beyond our power to live a holy life. This is a constant source of grief and anguish.
Romans 7:15 NAS - "For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate."

Romans 7:22-25 NAS - "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! "

- B. Oh how we need large measures of God's grace to live and grow in holiness
1. We need the grace of growing in our love for Christ and hatred of sin
 2. How we need the grace of humility. How we need the grace of love. These things cannot be created in our hearts by human effort alone.
 3. I continually cry out to God that the Holy Spirit might crush my wicked heart and grant larger measures of the grace of the holy fruit of righteousness.

Galatians 5:22-23 NAS - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control"

4. Mortification can only occur through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.
5. And we must never forget that God has provided certain means for the dispensing of His grace in holiness.
The means of grace in His Word, in prayer, in the sacraments, in Christian fellowship

III. God's Grace in Suffering

- A. Suffering is very much a part of our human condition
- 1 Peter 4:12 NAS** - "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;"
1. We can face all manner of trials and adversities as we live our lives
 2. On one hand it is testimony to the fallen nature of this world. This world is cursed because of sin and sorrows are consistent with living in this world.
 3. On the other hand, suffering for the Christian is never without design. God is working all good things in us.
 - Our trials may have the design of humbling us to make us more dependent upon Christ
 - They may have the design of chastening us for sin
 - They may have the design of exposing our weakness so that the power of God might be made more glorious in our sight.
 - They may have the design of calling our brethren to greater faithfulness in ministering to us.
- B. But we need much grace as we go through the trials
1. We are prone to murmur and complain which is great sin.
We need the grace of patience.
 2. We are prone to forget God and look only to our condition and earthly solutions. We need the grace of great faith.

3. We need the grace of knowing His abiding presence and His unfailing love for us Matthew Henry –
 “If he does not immediately put a period to our afflictions, yet we shall have his gracious presence with us in our troubles; he will take notice of our sorrows, and *know our souls in adversity*, will visit us graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with us, will take our part, will support and comfort us, and sanctify our afflictions to us, which will be the surest token of his presence with us in our troubles.” (from commentary on Psalm 91 – pronouns modified)
4. We need the grace to see that the greater our weakness might appear the greater His power is magnified in us.
2 Corinthians 12:9 KJV - "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

IV. God’s Grace in Service

- A. We are to labor long and hard in service to Christ
 1. The work of evangelism must encapsulate our entire life
 2. We must seek every opportunity to share the glorious Gospel of Christ
 3. We have a great desire to be found faithful
Matthew 25:23 KJV - " Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
 4. But the Gospel is not simply a human endeavor.
 5. It is also true that every Christian is gifted with particular strengths for the building up of the Church of Christ. These gifts are essential to our work. But these gifts are dispensed by the grace of God.
1 Peter 4:10 NAU - "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
- B. We are totally dependent upon the grace of God in our work
 1. The success of the Gospel is dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit
1 Corinthians 2:4 NAS - "And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
1 Corinthians 3:6-7 KJV - "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."
 2. The success of the Gospel ministry is dependent upon many things
 - a. There must be faithful labor and diligent study
 - b. There must be a powerful love for God’s people
 - c. There must be a passion for souls
 - d. There must be a great sense of our smallness before God – humility and meekness.

e. There must be the recognition of our total dependence upon the grace of God.

1 Corinthians 15:10 NAS - "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

3. Vocation . . .

Conclusion:

1. Do you understand how dependent you are upon God for His grace? We need Him for everything!
2. Do you understand how wicked it is to forget the blessings of God's grace. He wants us to be humble.

James 4:6 NAS - "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.""